

THE STORY OF THE  
**SPECTATOR**  
1828-1928

WILLIAM BEACH THOMAS

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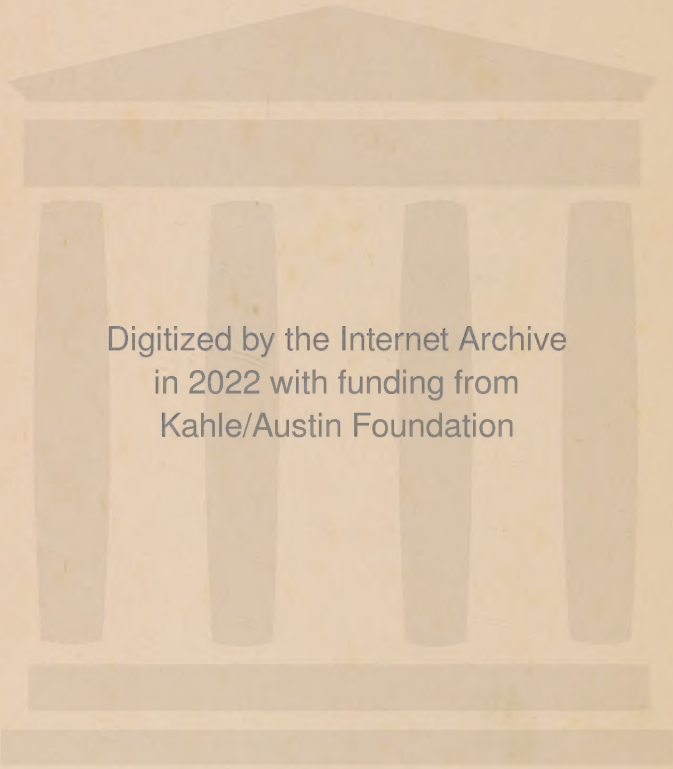
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The Story of  
**THE SPECTATOR**  
1828—1928



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# THE STORY OF THE SPECTATOR

1828—1928

BY  
WILLIAM BEACH THOMAS

WITH SIX ILLUSTRATIONS



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To the memory  
of  
FOUR GREAT EDITORS

*Robert Stephen Rintoul*

*Richard Holt Hutton*

*Meredith Townsend*

*John St. Loe Strachey*



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## NOTE

This *Story of The Spectator* was begun some years ago at the instance of Mr. St. Loe Strachey by Miss K. S. Leaf (now Mrs. Douglas West) ; and the greater share, especially in the work of research, is hers.



# THE STORY OF THE 'SPECTATOR', 1828-1928

## PART I—THE MAKERS

### CHAPTER I

#### TO-DAY AND TO-MORROW

A comparison with *Punch*. Following *The Times*. A permanent trusteeship. Proprietor-editors. Present ideals. Slum clearance. Speakers of English. Liquor control. League of Nations. Mr. Putnam's reminiscence. Thanks from America.

THE *Spectator* completed a hundred years of life in July, 1928. It can now soliloquize in the words of one of the last of Thomas Hardy's poems—contributed to the *Observer* in 1927:

Yes; yes; I am old. In me appears  
The history of a hundred years.

But it 'beats on' with healthy valves and arteries; and has a scheme of dignified longevity, of which something has to be said. Its long and consistent career offers as good a view of the political and literary activities of the period as *Punch* of the lighter

social changes. It may be said of its annals that seriousness has been to the *Spectator* very much what wit has been to *Punch*.

Perhaps the pleasantest way to read and indeed to study history is through contemporary criticism and records, which colour it but do not distort it ; and the *Spectator* has never been a mere mirror. Political and moral convictions have shone through its reflections, as a gracious humour through the satires of *Punch* ; and these convictions have been singularly continuous. Except for one brief interlude, four minds, two of them working as one, have guided the *Spectator* for the better part of the hundred years : Rintoul, Townsend-cum-Hutton, and St. Loe Strachey. Mr. Evelyn Wrench took up the succession in January, 1925. He too, in accordance with precedent, is editor and chief proprietor, both ; and he advances into the second century with as strong ideals and high hopes as his predecessors had.

In the desire to maintain what may be called the spiritual continuity of the paper, he has followed the example of Major J. J. Astor, and wrote in an article on the Independence of the British Press : ‘ We hope to ensure, as *The Times* has done, that the *Spectator* shall never be sold in the open market to the highest bidder, apart from other considerations.’

Now *The Times*, which had published its own scheme on 7 August, 1924, described it as a ‘ plan

to ensure the future independence of *The Times* in the national interest', and gave the essential details of the nature of the trusteeship. The *Spectator's* scheme, though it differs in detail, has been worked out on similar lines and is being put into action. The gist of it is the formation of a Committee 'for the special purposes of safeguarding future transfers of the controlling shares'. It is not in any sense to be identified either with the management or with the editorial policy. The sole object underlying its appointment is to ensure, as far as is humanly possible, that the ownership of the *Spectator* shall never be regarded as a mere matter of commerce, to be transferred, without regard to any other circumstances, to the highest bidder, or fall—so far as can be foreseen—into unworthy hands. With this object in view, it is thought desirable for the members of the Committee to act *ex-officio*, and that they should be precluded by their position from active party politics and that they should represent various elements, e.g., judicial, academic, scientific and financial, in national life.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> The members of the committee are the Lord Mayor of London (for the time being); the President of the Royal Society (for the time being); the President of the Royal Historical Society (for the time being); the President of the Law Society (for the time being); the President of the Institute of Chartered Accountants (for the time being); and the Chairman of the Committee of the Headmasters' Conference (for the time being).

How the present proprietor feels himself in apostolic succession to a great tradition may be inferred from the pages of the paper, but may be more directly illustrated. What are the ideals for which he wishes the *Spectator* to stand? If they were to be the occasion of an affirmation—to use a popular word of the moment—they would perhaps seem to some almost ludicrously conservative of tradition. The comments made in the *Spectator* of 1 May, 1858, in the obituary notice of the founder, Robert Stephen Rintoul, still stand :

‘ Such had always been felt to be the excellence of the *Spectator* as a reliable record of events, that even those subscribers who were most irritated by the course it pursued could find no substitute and continued their subscriptions. They swore at their leek, but they ate their leek too. By far the greater part of the regular readers of the *Spectator* have always been of a class that is not affected by partisan spleen : its circulation being chiefly, as it must always aim to be, among the men of culture, who like to listen to all sides of controversies, provided the argument is conducted with fairness and moderation.’

In writing of Rintoul that same week, the *Spectator* added :

‘ He redoubled his exertions to make this journal a truthful and attractive record of all social movements, and of all that was accomplished in art, science, or literature. And he set himself to promote social and civil reforms irrespective of party.’

Rintoul, who though a fighter was never a party man, and set out to make what may be called a household paper, was soon forced, as any man of

high conviction must be, to express his political faith. But like Townsend and Hutton, like St. Loe Strachey, he waited for the great cause ; and when it was present preached his faith without fear or favour of any political party ; and what is more, of any public. What the Reform Bill and Colonization were to Rintoul, the cause of the North in the American Civil War was to Hutton and Townsend. Neither would have surrendered his advocacy, if the paper had been reduced to a circulation of one.

Now most papers are not in a position to do this, however single their will. No journalist who is worth his salt can become a mere funnel for the ideas of others. It follows that in the expression of vital convictions, the editor and proprietor must be exactly of one mind or be one person ; and the outstanding fact in the history of the *Spectator*, which has produced its continuity of tone and character, is the accident of organization by which for the whole of the hundred years, excepting one very brief and inglorious interlude after the death of Rintoul, the owner of the paper has been the master spirit. The paper has expressed personality. Very often, though Rintoul wrote less than his successors, the proprietor has himself written the articles of his creed, when any greater events were present. That quality in the *Spectator* remains over into the second century.



St. Loe Strachey made some attempt—the first in the annals—to name and label the politics of the *Spectator*. He said it belonged to the ‘left centre’; and so far as the phrase has any definition, it is found to-day very much in the same place, and that a worthy place. After all, should not the left centre describe the whereabouts of the heart? At the left centre an intellectual admiration for tradition, a strong patriotism and zeal for the British Empire, may coincide with a deep sympathy for ‘those who live in small houses’, as a contemptuous autocrat once said; yes, and for those lesser animals who suffer needless pain, for those who live in burrows and nest in trees, as well as those who barely exist in slums. But it is no longer possible to separate social reform from political. The *Spectator*, in spite of some strong protests, is intent at the present in forcing the public to recognize the disgraceful state of the slums in our cities. Its motive has been the betterment of the race, the release of the poorer citizens from misery and disease of both body and mind. At the same time the parallel conviction must be felt and expressed that the slums are the breeding-places, as dust breeds flies, of the political creed of a perverted Communism, which in Russia has attempted to found its New Jerusalem on murder; and, in accord with its gospel as expressed by Karl Marx, would force the community into obedience



by the agency of a narrow oligarchy and a pervading police.

As the age grows more complicated with each year, a paper needs a wider and wider outlook. We can repeat to-day with cumulative conviction Renan's dictum : " Le siècle où j'ai vécu n'aura probablement pas été le plus grand, mais il sera tenu sans doute pour le plus amusant des siècles."

It happens that the present proprietor and editor is the founder of the Overseas League and of the English-speaking Union ; and it may be inferred, even without a knowledge of the weekly contents, that the *Spectator* to-day stands for a closer friendship with the United States as well as an ever more cordial union between the nations of the British Commonwealth.

One of the strongest convictions behind the paper to-day is this : that friendly co-operation among the English-speaking peoples is essential to the peace of the world and the stability of the world. *Tout connaître c'est tout pardonner* ; and it is the proper work of a newspaper to increase the knowledge between nations and people in order to put a date to petty misunderstandings and silly prejudices.

Such things are above and beyond politics, as the word is generally understood ; but it is one of the dangers of the time that every sort of movement is given a political complexion. One of the per-

manent endeavours of the present *Spectator* is to dissipate the notion, now too prevalent, that the League of Nations is the favourite of any one political party or of any two parties. If it is worth anything, it is designed to promote peace, and 'peace in our time' is a creed belonging not to the Conservative, the Liberal or the Labour Party, but to all.

In the late years of his editorship, St. Loe Strachey came down very strongly in favour of the public ownership and control of the drink traffic. The subject is integral to any scheme of social reform ; and the new proprietor is as strongly convinced as was his predecessor that a privately owned drink trade should not be permitted in a progressive democracy ; and he is determined to continue to work for the extension of the Carlisle System to the rest of Great Britain.

There never was a time when the world was 'so full of a number of things', which call for action as well as information, and the evolution of the *Spectator* has been along the line of action.

A great journalist was asked by a reformer in the days before the War, what daily paper he should write to ; and he answered, 'If you want people to *think* something, write to *The Times*. If you want them to *do* something, write to the *Daily Mail*.' Perhaps after all the distinction is a false one ; for

thought is the proper (though not the inevitable) prelude to action. When Rintoul invented and hammered home the phrase 'the Bill, the whole Bill, and nothing but the Bill,' he was urging to action ; but action of a rather different sort has been attempted since his day and since the days of Hutton and Townsend. A good example was the competition inaugurated by Mr. Strachey for building a £150 cottage. Such an enterprise can accelerate action by setting up a concrete example ; and in the future more action of this nature may be expected.

The need of a serious weekly paper was perhaps never so great as to-day (though the extinction of the class has been prophesied) if only because personality gets less and less chance of expression in the daily Press. The best comment on news has the virtue that Matthew Arnold found in great verse. It is made 'in tranquillity', and yet immediately enough to be actual and influential. Even the book-like form gives the paper a certain stability of its own ; and it is a common experience to-day, as revealed by correspondence to the *Spectator*, that it is read and re-read in places so remote from the office in York Street that any paper less stalwart in build could scarcely have withstood the transport and the handling. Individual numbers share the longevity of the organism itself.

In *What's What*, published in 1902, Harry

Quilter, a regular contributor to the *Spectator* and a very lively author, wrote :

‘ It would be scarcely an exaggeration to say that no other paper has endured in like fashion ; *The Times* itself is quite different from what it was thirty years ago. The whole tone of journalism has changed. Why has the *Spectator* survived unchanged ? ’

The celebration of its centenary is a suitable date for attempting to answer that question. Doubtless the *Spectator* too has changed much since that was written. It certainly suffered a short change in character after the War, though it returned to its tracks after a brief interval. But when all is said of its alterations and its evolution, it is still true on the hundredth birthday that it is more like itself than any other paper. The child has been father to the man. And there is more value than at first appears in tradition and continuity as possessed by a newspaper. Mr. George Haven Putnam, an old correspondent of the *Spectator*, writing in June, 1925, recorded that he had been reading the paper continuously for seventy-one years. He recalled vividly its accounts ‘ of the battles, which in those days boomed as great battles, of Balaclava and Inkerman ’ ; and incidentally gives a quaint reminiscence of another Crimean battle. Dr. Kane, the Arctic explorer, returning after three years in the North, was met with the news of the capture of

Sebastopol. 'Who, where and what is Sebastopol?' he asked. It indicates the great change in the nature of weekly newspapers, now too often wholly concerned with comment, that Mr. Putnam took his information of the Sepoy Rebellion in 1857 from 'the thrilling articles in the *Spectator*'. Like all its readers who survive from those days, Mr. Putnam (and he served as soldier in the War of North and South) remembers with gratitude the *Spectator's* championship of the cause of the North; and it is on this head that he most saliently illustrates the value of a tradition of honest and brave conviction. He wrote:

'Hutton and Townsend also held that the maintenance of the Republic was something of continued importance for Great Britain and for all the English-speaking peoples of the world. They realized that the American Republic stood for representative government and, as the English-speaking peoples had been responsible, from the time of Magna Charta on, for the organization and maintenance of representative government, they held it to be essential that the great example of such government should not be crushed out of existence. The Editors of the *Spectator* were wiser in taking this part in directing public opinion in their day than were John Delane of *The Times*, Lord Palmerston, Lord Russell and other English leaders, who were sympathetic with the attempt to break up the Republic. I recall the word of an old Major-General given to me in London in July, 1918. The news had just arrived of the fight at Château Thierry, the first fight in which American troops had been given an opportunity to show what they could do. The General came to me with a newspaper in his hands, and with the words, "Major, those Yankee boys of yours can fight." I said that I had thought they would fight; they had fought with me half a century ago.

“ And,” continued the General, “ there are one million of them in France.” I answered, “ There are two millions, and eight millions more ready to come.” The General thought for a moment, and then remarked : “ Major, we are rather glad that we did not break up your Republic in 1861. We think you can be useful to us.” The General’s word in 1918 confirmed the wisdom of the position taken by the *Spectator* during the four years’ struggle of 1861–1865.’

The good wrought by this sturdy conviction of Hutton and Townsend was certainly not ‘ interred with their bones ’. It helped to bear fruit just half a century later. Such a tradition is one that neither public nor staff can escape, if they would ; and they certainly would not.



## CHAPTER II

### THE FOUNDER

Eighteenth-century newspapers. Daily papers in 1828. Rintoul and the *Dundee Advertiser*. Visit to London. Leaves Edinburgh. Editor of the *Atlas*. Founder of the *Spectator*. Letters to Blackwood. The *Colonial Gazette*. Hunt and Hazlitt. Rintoul's character.

WHEN the *Spectator* was born, the child of a very lusty father, in 1828, the year of the birth of a future editor, newspapers as we know them had already become a social institution. The Georgian Press emerged from the graves of the famous and notorious pamphlets and broadsheets that were killed by taxes towards the end of the reign of Queen Anne. In her days, when journalism, with other urbane habits, first became a part of the nation's daily life, it was true enough to say that 'the newspaper proper is a pamphlet, published periodically'.<sup>1</sup>

In those days men went to press only when they had something special to say, either of startling news, of political import, or of moral significance. Consequently, a Queen Anne newspaper was either

<sup>1</sup> Knight's *London*, 1843.

an official broadsheet (like the *Gazette* and the *Daily Courant*) or else political propaganda (like Bolingbroke's *Examiner* and Swift's *Whig Examiner*), or else a lay sermon from Mr. Tatler or Mr. Spectator. Each of these papers was a one-man, or perhaps two-men venture, and except for the *Gazette* and its private imitators, they did not concern themselves with spreading news. They were written by accomplished politicians who were also literary men ; and they were written for a select coffee-house public, supposed to be in possession of important news as soon as the editors themselves. And as the papers were dependent on the swerving, fluctuating whims of the fashionable class, they must win fame in their first few numbers, or not at all. For there were seldom more numbers than the first few. Satire was the favourite method of Queen Anne papers, and therefore their existence was as precarious as it was predatory, for sometimes even the governmental worm would turn ; and in 1712, Swift wrote to his Stella :

‘ Do you know that Grub Street is dead and gone last week ? No more ghosts or murders now for love or money. I plied it pretty close the last fortnight, and published at least seven penny papers of my own, besides some of other people's, but now every single half-sheet pays a half-penny to the Queen. The *Observer* is fallen, the *Medleys* are jumbled together with the *Flying Post* ; the *Examiner* is deadly sick ; the *Spectator* keeps up, and doubles its price ; I know not how long it will hold.’

As it happened, the *Spectator* 'held' only for a few weeks ; and though its loss was a high price to pay to be rid of all those penny papers of which Swift alone published 'at least seven', yet we cannot but see the Government's point of view in this matter.

As the century grew older, journalism became more than ever political, though no less personal ; so that the *North Briton* and the *Public Advertiser* are only remembered as the weapons of Wilkes and Junius. But towards the end of the century several daily papers of the modern type were started, which both reported news and preached a definite political creed. Such papers were the *Morning Chronicle*, the *Morning Post* and *The Times*, all of which were flourishing in 1828, in spite of the heavy taxes, and often in defiance of the scowls of Government. Moreover, newspapers were no longer the play-things of clubmen and littérateurs ; the *Morning Post*, it is true, was a magnifico of the ordinary, as well as of the intellectual sort ; but *The Times* was already setting itself up as a new and independent power in the state ; while such weekly papers as Cobbett's *Register* and the *Examiner* (1808) were loudly championing the people. Nearly all united, both for their sakes and for the sakes of their impecunious readers, in demanding the repeal of the taxes on knowledge, only *The Times*, content with

its enormous circulation, and afraid of competition, maintained that things were very well as they were !

It was clear that newspapers could not be taxed out of existence ; it was also clear that they were a power in the land. Charles Greville, Clerk of the Council to three monarchs, was no alarmist. On the contrary, he pooh-poohed the cholera scare in 1832, and was in general unmoved by the rumours that he so diligently sought out and recorded. Yet writing in December, 1832, under the awful menace of Reform, of ' the propriety and feasibility of setting up some dyke to arrest the torrent of innovation ', he deplored the fact that ' all the press is almost silenced, or united on the other side. *John Bull* alone fights the battle, but *John Bull* defends so many indefensible things that its advocacy is not worth much '. He considered the possibility of meeting these troublesome papers on their own ground, for ' an anti-Radical on the plan of the anti-Jacobin might be of some use '. But for the moment he could only protest : ' I wrote a letter yesterday to Barnes, remonstrating upon the general tone of *The Times*, and inviting him to adopt some Conservative principles in the midst of his zeal for Reform.' Two years later he was at great pains to bring about an understanding between *The Times* and the leaders of his party.

When Rintoul brought out the initial number

of the *Spectator* in 1828, the papers were already marshalling themselves for battle. *The Times* still stood rather apart, but was ultimately to lead the Reform attack ; behind it were ranged the idealistic *Examiner* ; and the popular Cobbett's *Register*, playing Sancho Panza to the *Examiner's* Quixote ; and behind these again were drawn up the *News*, the *Morning Herald*, and many others.

The *Morning Post* was prominent in the hostile ranks of reaction, eager to take its hat off to the Duke of Wellington ' as the greatest warrior and statesman of the age, and the glory of the British nation ', ' and anxious to barricade the flood-gates of democracy, the mighty and irresistible torrent of which threatens, if unchecked, to sweep away the altar and the throne ' ; while beside it stood *John Bull*, with sleeves rolled up for doing the dirty work.

These papers were active, both in spreading news, especially the more dramatic and curious events, and in thundering political views. But there was a gap ; there was room in plenty for a paper of a different type in which both news as such and political views, as such, were secondary ; for a paper of a more leisurely and critical outlook, for a paper in which a historical record of facts, interesting to well-educated persons, should be seen week by week through the mind of an accurate but zealous performer.



The opening was first appreciated and filled by a young provincial printer and journalist. We know more about his character than his career. Neither in his early days nor after he founded the *Spectator* and became a personage, is there any full record of his life. We are not even sure who were his friends. One would like to know more ; but we know most about the crucial years just before and just after he came to London. Provincial papers began to flourish, though not exorbitantly, along with the metropolitan ; and most of them were of local Grub Streets, grubby. A notable exception, too little regarded by historians of the Press, was the *Dundee Advertiser*, founded about the beginning of the century. In the files of 1809 appears the name of ' Rintoul, printer '. Two years later Robert Stephen Rintoul had become the editor. There is no clue by which we can trace this rapid progress, except what we know of Rintoul's character. He was described after his death as being ' emphatically a man of action ' ; and the same attributed his ' honourable though not dazzling success ' to ' the incessant, regulated exertion of well-balanced faculties '. Already, no doubt, ' his capacity for labour was unsurpassed ' ; perhaps his ' exterior ' was already ' somewhat brusque and peremptory '. He seems to have been a gaunt and perhaps rather dour youth, fiercely independent, already dominating



men by 'the patient passion of a strong will and genial heart'. But his later portrait, that hangs on the wall of the present office in York Street, reveals urbanity as well.

Very soon

'the talent and energy he evinced, in conducting a Liberal journal—at a time when such an employment was vastly more dangerous than now—in the north of Scotland, attracted the notice of Lord Kinnaird, Douglas Kinnaird, and other distinguished Liberals, with whom he became intimately associated.'<sup>1</sup>

And there was another side of his nature which endeared him to the hearts of these Liberal leaders. For

'he was at once fond of intellectual pursuits, and fond of society—in which his natural sagacity and an original vein of humour made him highly popular. . . . Rintoul's intelligence and a certain racy originality in his conversation rendered him an especial favourite at Panmure House.'<sup>2</sup>

This was the seat of Lord Panmure, who had in 1791 espoused the Whig cause 'with characteristic ardour' and who had since then served his party 'with his purse, his person and his popularity'.<sup>3</sup> But he was renowned chiefly for his convivial virtues: 'He had scarcely entered the arena before universal consent hailed him as the very prince of boon-companions. Even in Edinburgh he was known as "The Generous Sports-

<sup>1</sup> *Daily News*, 1858.

<sup>2</sup> *Spectator*, 1 May, 1858.

<sup>3</sup> Norrie, *Dundee Celebrities*.

man ” ; ’ later, ‘ his youthful sallies having subsided ’, he was for many years ‘ in the public eye only as a warm-hearted hospitable nobleman ’. It was at his table, then, ‘ in what was perhaps the most convivial province in Scotland,’ that the eager young editor became intimately associated with such men as Lord Kinnaird, Henry Cockburn, and Douglas Kinnaird—the friend of Byron, and famous for his ‘ mob-dinners ’. There, too, he first met Joseph Hume in 1818, and endorsed the economist’s very practical criticism of Sir Francis Burdett : ‘ He talks well, but what has he done ? ’ We are told that ‘ the rest of the company . . . were rather startled by such a heretical doubt . . . but that Rintoul sympathized from the first with the declaration in favour of real work ’, and that ‘ the “ do-something ” creed . . . soon became the political creed of the district.’

There was certainly plenty to be done, and Rintoul made of the *Advertiser* an efficient weapon of Reform. It was at that date a weekly paper, and was made up chiefly of extracts from the London dailies, without criticism or comment. But Rintoul saw that, to influence opinion, a paper must adopt a definite opinion of its own, using facts as illustrations as well as for their own sakes. He therefore introduced short articles on current events, gathering able men round him to help him in the good work.

‘The manner in which he set himself to the discharge of his editorial duties was characteristic,’ wrote a colleague after his death :

‘The account we had from his own mouth. His first aim was to make his paper as complete a record of contemporary history as possible. In order that nothing of importance should be omitted he sought to economize space ; in order that none of the contents should be overlooked by the reader he sought to perfect their distribution and arrangement. Even at that early period of his career he attempted to elevate the compilation of a newspaper into an art. The selection, condensation and classification of news and discussions in each successive issue was carefully studied with a view to make the paper complete and attractive as a whole. To attain this end, he, at least on one occasion, actually re-wrote the whole contents of a number of his journal. Such conscientious efforts to excel were rewarded by the rapid extension of the circulation of the *Advertiser* and its growth in popularity.’<sup>1</sup>

Some of Rintoul’s contributors were interesting men ; two of them—Tom Hood and Thomas Chalmers—were famous. Chalmers was not then the confident, determined man who led the Free Church in 1843, but he

was already emerging from the obscurity of a country parish and was then at the turning-point of his career. . . . After earnest efforts to accommodate himself to the conventional tone of the religious circles, he would at times seek relief in the conversation of his older associates, and Rintoul was often resorted to for this purpose. . . . And Rintoul was even then one of those who repay the communication of a new idea by reproducing it in modified form and suggesting its association with other trains of thought.’<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> 1 May, 1858.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*

'This faculty for listening sympathetically to the unfolding of other men's ideas, for judging them impartially, and for correlating them with other facts and theories, must have been a large factor in Rintoul's editorial success, for in just the same way ' he studied every political question—both in itself and in its relations to a general system—before he took his side '.

It was Rintoul who first harnessed the turbulent genius of a certain Robert Mudie, and provided him with a legitimate use for his ironic logic. Mudie's career reads like a picaresque romance; he had been a shepherd, a weaver, and a militiaman; but when Rintoul discovered him he had settled down in Dundee Academy as a teacher of arithmetic and of drawing—though ' nature had in a great measure refused him a painter's genius.'<sup>2</sup> As a contributor of the *Advertiser* he so fiercely vented his spleen against the borough magnates that they deprived him of one of his teaching appointments; while one worthy even ' spat in his face and "kicked him on the point of honour." ' <sup>3</sup>

Rintoul at once took up the question of municipal reform, and came into

'intimate relations with men fond it might be of a somewhat ruder sociability, but who in their business pursuits had developed a robust sagacity. In combination with these men he

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<sup>1</sup> 1 May, 1858.    <sup>2</sup> Norrie, *Dundee Celebrities*.    <sup>3</sup> *Ibid*.

made his paper a formidable assailant of the corrupt proceedings of the close corporation of the town.'<sup>1</sup>

In 1819 a commission was set up in Westminster to inquire into the condition of the Scottish towns, an investigation which led ultimately to the passing of the Scottish Burghs Act in 1833. And it was as the representative of the Guildry and Trades Incorporation of Dundee that the serious but satiric Scot paid his first visit to London—the London of Nash and the Prince Regent. All we know about his visit is that his fellow-townsmen afforded him his fare to the metropolis; and that they testified to their gratitude and esteem on his return by deciding to give him the freedom of the burgh and a gold snuff-box. Money was borrowed, the box was purchased; but the upright Rintoul refused to accept a gift that had not been paid for, so that it was not until 1828, when the arrears had all been paid up, that the presentation was actually made.

Before then, however, in 1825, Rintoul had left Dundee and the *Advertiser*, and had started a short-lived paper in Edinburgh. There he came in contact with a *milieu* very different from that of the Dundee reformers: he met that brilliant, almost fabulous band of Tory champions, whose battle standard was *Blackwood's Magazine*, and whose butts were Whiggery and the Cockney school. In

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*



spite of the fundamental differences between their opinion, Rintoul formed a real friendship with William Blackwood, and always kept a warm place in his heart even for Christopher North, that torrential Tory.

But with *Blackwood's* on the right hand, and the *Edinburgh* on the left, there was no room to spare for an ambitious young man who had a serious mission of his own to fulfil. So he went to London, where Douglas Kinnaird had him appointed editor of the *Atlas*, a new London weekly. The *Atlas* was a bright and chatty production, describing itself as 'a general newspaper and journal of literature. On the largest sheet ever issued for the press; embracing a most extensive collection of news, both foreign and domestic, with original essays, literary criticisms, articles on science, etc., etc.' The bulk of the paper was composed of news items quoted from the daily press, parliamentary proceedings, reported in indirect speech, brief summaries of news; and a miscellaneous collection of funny stories, unusual incidents and court gossip. There were also short 'Essays and Jeux d'Esprit', and reviews of books and of the fine-arts. The latter were outspoken; and the Royal Academy was dismissed as 'the severest trial to the eyes and the patience known to this nation'.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> The *Atlas*, 21 May, 1826.

It was as editor of the *Atlas* that Rintoul mastered the delicate business of editing a weekly London paper; the *Spectator* was to prove how well he had learnt his lesson. But in 1828 occurred a quarrel with the proprietors, as mysterious as the cause of his decampment from the *Dundee Advertiser*. He wrote of this break to his friend, W. Blackwood, saying: 'I have—in consequence of attempts to vulgarize and betwaddle the *Atlas*—contrary to our compact, and to the line of conduct which gave that paper its literary character—withdrawn, and all the literary contributors are with me.'

But the confidence of Rintoul's friends was unshaken; and they were still 'entirely convinced of his integrity and usefulness'. Led by Douglas Kinnaird and Joseph Hume, they accordingly subscribed capital sufficient to launch a new venture, of which Rintoul was made editor with absolute power, and which was called the *Spectator*. Always 'the great ambition of his life was to edit a perfect newspaper'; and

in the management of this journal the methods and principles he affected found full scope and distinct embodiment. From the beginning, the *Spectator* was a marvel of "getting up". From its first line to its last, all its passages seemed as if written by the same hand. That the fact should really be so, was of course a physical impossibility. Mr. Rintoul wrote comparatively little himself; but all that appeared bore his stamp and breathed his ideas. He had always the happy knack, not only of winning coadjutors, but of keeping them in order—of

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getting others to write for him, but taking care that they wrote as he wished.’<sup>1</sup>

The paper advertised itself in *The Times* of 11 July, 1828, as ‘The New London Weekly Paper, by the original Editor and contributors of the *Atlas*’, and noted carefully that ‘the conductors of the *Spectator*’ had ‘ceased to have any concern with the *Atlas* at the 8th of June last, when they terminated an engagement which has subsisted from the commencement of that paper’. Evidently his fellow-workers on the *Atlas* had divined ‘the true and tender kindness which in him was partially cloaked by a somewhat rough exterior’, and had taken his side in the dispute.

By this time, we are told ‘the lapse of three lustres had somewhat abated the headlong impetuosity of youth.’ There were to be no more quarrels. From now onwards, Rintoul worked in harmony with his staff, exercising

‘that indefatigable labour which made him the informing spirit of every part of his journal. He suggested the papers, he supplied suggestions as to the mode of treating them, he carefully and critically analysed every article, and urged its writer to revision with a view to make it as perfect as possible. In the news department there was the same labour; in the selection, condensation and arrangement of the intelligence he took an active and unwearied part.’<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Norrie, *Dundee Celebrities*.

<sup>2</sup> *Daily News*, 1 May, 1858.

On 11 November, 1828, he wrote hopefully to Blackwood, stating his claims and ambitions for the *Spectator*.

‘It is very gratifying to me to learn that the *Spectator* has gained the favourable opinion of your friends. . . . There is at least one feature of resemblance between the *Spectator* and *Maga* herself—straight-forwardness, and the preference of plain, strong sense to affected finery or to Cockney simplicity.

‘There is no cant in the *Spectator*, no indecency, no impiety, may I say no trash, and not much dullness. We have already obtained, even from fastidious critics in high station, the sobriquet of the gentleman’s paper, no bad distinction in these times.’<sup>1</sup>

Little is known of Rintoul’s private life after 1828, except that in 1835 he revisited Dundee with his family, when ‘occasion was taken by some of his friends to present him with a handsome silver tea-set, as a mark of the feeling of political attachment and personal regard which were entertained for him’; that in February, 1858, he sold the paper for a lump sum and a large annuity; and that in April of that year he ‘at length succumbed, peacefully, to the universal enemy’.<sup>2</sup> For the rest, ‘his history from that day (the foundation of the *Spectator*) to the day of his death, was the history of the journal.’<sup>3</sup>

But in 1839 he undertook another trust, the

<sup>1</sup> Mrs. Oliphant, *William Blackwood and his Sons*, Vol. i, p. 513.

<sup>2</sup> *Dundee Advertiser*, 4 May, 1858.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*

*Colonial Gazette*, of which Edward Gibbon Wakefield wrote in 1849 that

‘The *Colonial Gazette* was established and was for some years carried on by members of the Colonization Society of 1830. This journal exercised an influence very much greater than its circulation. In consequence of the smallness of the demand for such a publication in the mother-country, and the very small sale for it in the Colonies, because the local newspapers, one and all, reprinted its contents, it could not be carried on without a loss of money, and was finally abandoned on that account ; but while it lasted, it may be said to have had more influence than the Colonial Office on the government of Canada ; it produced important changes of opinion in the West Indies ; it originated in many colonies an ardent longing for self-government : above all, it continually applied a stimulating goad to the sluggish Colonial Office, which it thus urged into the performance of some good, besides stripping and exposing it to the public gaze.’<sup>1</sup>

Rintoul undertook this rather thankless charge with characteristic cheerfulness and determination, and wrote to Blackwood on 17 December, 1839 :

‘You may have heard that the *Colonial Gazette* was transferred to me some months ago, by the original proprietor, Mr. J. W. Parker. At that time, the number was very small,—but it has grown in my hands upwards of 50 per cent., with a regular weekly increase, and in the most influential quarters. The *Colonial Gazette* is in very high favour among the leading merchants in the city ; and it promises soon to stand to the Press in the colonies much in the same relation that the *Spectator* bears to the provincial Press of this country—supplying much of its matter, and considerably influencing opinion.’

Looking back afterwards, Wakefield saw that this copying in the colonial Press, of which Rintoul was

<sup>1</sup> *Art of Colonization*, by E. G. Wakefield, 1849.



so proud, was really the financial undoing of the *Gazette*.

It is impossible to discover who were really Rintoul's friends, although Norrie writes with enviable confidence that 'he became the friend of Bentham, Mill, Thomson, and the rest of that confraternity', and Mr. Millar's life of him in the *Dictionary of National Biography* evidently accepts this statement. The writer of the obituary notice in the *Spectator*, apparently a colleague of Rintoul's for thirty years, must have known who were his friends in 1828—yet he never mentions Bentham and Mill; though he says that Rintoul enjoyed Hume's friendship even before he left Scotland. On 5 March, 1831, the *Spectator* threw out a few suggestions to voters as to men suitable for candidates at the coming election; adding that 'these are mere examples, since we have no personal knowledge of the gentlemen named'; and among the gentlemen named was James Mill. This seems to contradict Norrie's statement, for even if he did not write the article, Rintoul must have seen it and passed it, and if he did not know Mill, it is unlikely that he knew Bentham, who was later suggested as another possible candidate. But if Rintoul did not know Bentham in March, 1831, he can scarcely have known him at all, since Bentham died in the following year. As for Poulett Thomson, it was not

as a friend and colleague that the *Spectator* wrote of him when he was made Governor-General of Canada, sneering at the 'imbecility of character which the world attributes to poor Pow'. On the whole, it looks as if Rintoul was never of the confraternity of philosophical Radicals.

Nor, with apologies to the writer of that obituary notice, was Hazlitt ever an associate of Rintoul's on the *Atlas*. To disprove this, there is a letter written by Rintoul to Blackwood in the chortling tone of one who has heard and cannot quite get over a prime piece of gossip :

'Who of all men do you think are now engaged to prop the *Atlas*, but Leigh Hunt and William Hazlitt! Why their very names would sink the *Atlas* 50 per cent. were the undoubted fact known—for, in my day, we looked far more to the support of the Clergy, the Army, etc., than the classes whom H. and H. write for. "The Breakfast Table" in three or four numbers is Hunt's; Hazlitt's are smaller contributions, the sweepings of his desk-puns, etc. This is entre nous.'<sup>1</sup>

For an estimate of Rintoul's character, we must look in part to obituary notices; but the imprint of his personality is stamped—almost as clearly as the Government stamp—upon his paper. That he managed so to infuse his own ideas and personality through the paper, and to identify it with himself, is the more remarkable because he did not write it himself, as Fonblanque wrote the *Examiner*, or as

<sup>1</sup> 15 January, 1829.

Addison and Steele wrote the old *Spectator*. Yet his personality imbued the whole.

The published accounts of his character are distressingly reminiscent of the old tales of the good apprentices. For instance, the notice in the *Spectator* on 1 May, 1858, sententiously declares :—

‘ We have desired to exhibit Rintoul as a remarkable example of the extent to which the cultivation of knowledge and the adherence to principles of integrity may contribute to success in the career of journalism. He saw that integrity and ability are the only legitimate sources of success for a journalist. By adhering to these simple maxims he earned for this journal a character which it has steadily maintained.’

Surely this rivals the career of ‘ Charles Augustus Fortescue ’ as an exemplar of what may be achieved ‘ by simply doing right ’.

Yet it is true that Rintoul was a model journalist. He was ‘ in private life . . . a man of firm integrity, reliable wisdom, and cheerful habit ’, and these qualities were all employed in the public service. In the first place, he was rigidly honest, not only in fact, but in his whole attitude towards life. ‘ He had naturally a propensity to examine every question from all points of view ’ and ‘ was anxious to free his mind from all prepossessions that might obscure the truth ’. He judged every question that arose on its own merits, according to his matured and tested scheme of right and wrong ; and when he took a side, it was always with a cause, and never with a

man or a party. Consequently, 'amid the howl of faction, the *Spectator* preserved unabated its influence and its prosperity.' And, as usual, honesty proved to be the best policy and virtue was its own reward.

In the second place he watched life ; ' his greatest pleasure was to study man and society in all their phases ' ; and he was ' a just and shrewd appreciator of men and things '. And when events had many times proved him right, there grew up in the hearts of his readers a consoling surety that his judgment was reliable. Henceforth, they knew where they were with him.

Thirdly, he was an optimist. The early numbers of the *Spectator* ring with an invincibly cheerful noise. It may sometimes jar on the mind's ear of less sanguine age ; but it was no more than the tempered and chastened optimism prevalent at that date.

As a man he was as entertaining and lovable as he was upright. The obituary notices pay stiff and elegiac tribute to his great kindness, saying that he was ' undemonstrative, but sincere, ready enough to do a kind thing, but utterly averse to artifice ', and ' that he was a just, kind and considerate master will be believed from the fact that none wept more bitterly over his closing tomb than the principal members of his publishing establishment, who had been with him throughout the whole thirty years of the *Spectator's* existence '.

## CHAPTER III

### A NEWSPAPER'S EVOLUTION

A family journal. Keene and Macready. An increasing circulation. Letters to Blackwood. From 9d. to 1s. Power of the Press. Backing Reform. Support for Trade Unions. The Chartists. A prophecy.

WE need no evidence, internal or external, for inferring that Rintoul took his title from Addison's *Spectator*. Some minor *Spectators* are on record ; but the name belongs to Addison and Steele, and was at once copied in other countries, by Marivaux for example, who published *Le Spectateur Français* in 1722, eight years after the death of the eighth and last volume of the *Spectator*.

An ingenious critic could perhaps find evidence that Rintoul had studied the original ; and was thinking of Addison when he emphasized the unpolitical purpose of his paper. But the similarity is too slight to emphasize. The first *Spectator*, published two months after the end of the *Tatler*, on 1 March, 1711, was a daily, in the sense that it appeared every day until it was temporarily dis-



continued after 8 December, 1712. In a subsequent introduction to the first volume of essays is a passage at least suggestive of Rintoul's prospectus.

'The *Spectator*, in one of the first papers, exhibited the political tenets of its authors ; but they soon took a resolution of courting general approbation by general topics : such as literature, morality and family life. Before the *Tatler* and *Spectator* (if the writers for the theatre be excepted), England had no masters of common life.'

Rintoul's description of his *Spectator* at its christening as a 'family journal' at least suggests a reference to Addison's introduction.

Exactly what he meant does not much matter, but the word at that date generally connoted, on the negative side, non-political. Detachment was its avowed ideal, and its object primarily to give news with an accuracy, impartiality and clarity of arrangement impossible to anyone who was angrily taking a side. It was as if Rintoul had said to himself, as Harriet Martineau said to herself a few years later : 'The possibility is open before me of showing what a periodical with a perfect temper may be,' and the only claim which the paper made for itself in its initial number was for the quality of its news.

'The principal object of a newspaper is to convey intelligence. It is proposed in the *Spectator* to give the first and most prominent place to a report of all the leading occurrences of the week. In this department, the reader may always expect a summary account of every public proceeding or transaction of

interest, whether the scene may be at home or abroad, that has taken place within the 7 days preceding the termination of our labours ; which, we wish it to be remarked, close on *Saturday* at midnight.' <sup>1</sup>

This is not a boast ; it is merely a statement, and a very moderate one at that, for the first-page summary of the week's news was always admirably digested and condensed, while nothing was sacrificed to brevity. In the words of an advertisement of the *Spectator*, ' the whole news of the week ' is ' so selected, sifted, condensed and arranged, as to be readable throughout.' <sup>2</sup>

The first number tells better than any text-book just what questions were occupying the public mind in the summer of 1828 ; abroad—' the Russians are advancing slowly in their invasion of Bulgaria,' and ' the Regent of Portugal is endeavouring to cover his usurpation of royalty by such forms as are within his reach.' Nearer home, ' the Irish Catholics are disputing the re-election of Mr. Vesey Fitzgerald for the county of Clare.' From Parliament comes the report of ' a lively scene of personal altercation ' ; while on another day, we are told, ' a multifarious debate took place.' A regular reader of the *Spectator* wrote in 1871, apropos of the paper's ' clear and copious summary of the events of the week ', that ' he who carefully reads that part of the *Spectator*

<sup>1</sup> 6 July, 1828.

<sup>2</sup> *The Times*, 12 August, 1828.

cannot appear ill-informed in relation to the intelligence of the day, no matter in what society he may happen to move'; and this must have been as true in 1828 as it was forty or 100 years later.

But the news purveyed by the *Spectator* in the reigns of George IV and William IV was not all of this edifying description; for it was not merely a weekly review. Papers were then so expensive that men could not afford two dailies and several assorted weeklies as they do to-day. Therefore, to most of its readers, and especially to the provincial ones, the *Spectator* endeavoured to be *Spectator*, *Daily Mail*, *Evening Standard*, and since it had occasional illustrations, *Bystander*, all bound into one. It had to give all the news, which included then—as it does now, and as it did in mediæval chronicles—curious accidents, grim coincidences, and the offscourings of 'battle, murder and sudden death'. It had to pander to the demand for smart gossip, and for mysterious affairs in high life—such as the marriage 'between the son of a baronet and a very lovely girl, the daughter of a peer', and how she fell from her chamber window soon after the ceremony. The chief item of court news is that 'the King's giraffe is given over by the physicians. The complaint seems to be a general debility, with an especial weakness of the knee joints.'

Although 'the principal object of a newspaper is

to convey intelligence', the *Spectator* was never a mere news-sheet. As the advertisements said,

'the tone and character of the *Spectator*, the variety of its contents, and even its external form, peculiarly fit it for the use of respectable families. Its plan is entirely new, comprising (1) the whole news of the week ; (2) a full and impartial exhibition of all the leading politics of the day ; (3) a separate discussion of interesting topics of a general nature, with a view to instruction and entertainment at the same time ; (4) a department devoted to literature, consisting of independent criticisms of the new books, with specimens of the best passages ; (5) dramatic and musical criticism ; (6) scientific and miscellaneous information.'

In the first number the politics of the day were discussed in short leaders of half a column to a column in length ; to which was added a vigorous denunciation of 'the Ungentility of Suicide'.

'The chronicles of the week record two cases of suicide—one of Hannah Latimore, a cook-maid, who drowned herself in the Serpentine for love of Joshua Kemp, a private in the guards ; and the other of ——— Montgomery. These unhappy instances . . . will tend to put the foolish habit of suicide out of fashion ; it is already on the wane. We have often wondered what enables such poor miserable starvelings . . . to abandon the light of the blessed sun with so much heroic seeming. Dying is no light matter, take it any way we like. The only solution we can give is that it is not grief but vanity that leads to these pranks. . . . It is certainly worth trying whether neglect may not cure where admonition has been found fruitless.'

In its criticism of the arts, the *Spectator* was from the first outspoken. A dramatic review reports 'that Kean has been playing at Paris to empty benches, whilst overflowing houses welcomed Macready.'

Genius is unnoticed ; and what, to be perfect, wants nothing but genius, is admired ' ; while ' we cannot congratulate ourselves upon the progress of the musical art in London.' The ' Literary Spectator ' petulantly demands of the world of books—' What has been *done* ? ' and he was pettish, too, about the more popular novelists of the day, for ' of the novels purporting to describe fashionable life, there has been a large crop. . . . It has now been sufficiently described, . . . till fashionable life is as well known on the wolds of Yorkshire, or the wilds of Exmoor, as it is in Grosvenor Square.' As for poetry—' We have no poetry. . . . The only pieces that have given us the least pleasure have been some—too slight almost to mention as an exception—chiefly written in South Africa ; and it may be that the novelty of the scenery contributes mainly to our satisfaction.'

It was without exaggeration that the *Spectator* boasted two and a half years later, saying :

' We do not hesitate to point out that the *Spectator* is no ordinary compilation, thrown together without taste, order, and almost without effort. We began with the conscientious determination of working up each department as it were even an affair of state . . . ; and we have continued to act up to the resolve till the world has recognized the value of our efforts.' <sup>1</sup>

The business side of the *Spectator's* early history is difficult to extricate from few and contradictory

<sup>1</sup> 1 January, 1831.



‘ facts ’. The price of the paper was at first 9d., which was low, considering that every paper had then to pay a tax of 4d., with a discount of 20 per cent. for every copy sold ; that an additional tax of 3s. 6d. had to be paid on every advertisement ; to say nothing of 3d. a lb. on paper.

The advertisements in the early numbers were almost entirely of books and magazines, and an historian estimated that those in the first number could not have been worth more than £5 in all.<sup>1</sup> On the other hand, Rintoul, unlike the conventional Scot of after-dinner speeches, was a generous man ; ‘ his charity was large ’ and he sometimes paid as much as £10 for a single contribution.<sup>2</sup> Small wonder, therefore, that the paper was for several years conducted at a loss, estimated at £7,000 or £8,000 in the first two years. It won its way only by the perseverance of Rintoul, and its own excellence. John Stuart Mill, writing in his *Autobiography* of the failure of his *London Review* (1834), said : ‘ I do not believe that any devices would have made a radical and democratic review defray its expenses, including a paid editor or sub-editor, and a liberal payment to writers.’ But the *Spectator* in its dark days was always confident of being at last ‘ in receipt of those high rewards with which zealous public service is always sooner or later endowed ’ ;

<sup>1</sup> James Grant, *The Newspaper Press*.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*

until there surely came a time when they were treated 'with the honourable distinction of old and favoured servants'—and with the honourable rewards as well.

The *Spectator* profited by the fight for Reform in more ways than one. The stamp returns of 1832 showed an increase of 52,950 copies in the year's circulation—or over 1,000 a week. It was second only to that of *John Bull* among the eleven weekly papers. The actual circulation remained very small until after Rintoul's death, 'being chiefly, as it must always aim to be, among men of culture.'<sup>1</sup> In his *English Newspapers* Fox-Bourne estimates it as low as 1,500 in 1843; but the figure given in Knight's *London*, published in the same year, is about 3,850. In answer to an attack in the *Weekly Chronicle* in 1840, the *Spectator* itself quotes a half-yearly stamp return of 88,000, which works out at a weekly circulation of about 3,500 copies. Opportunity was also taken of this unpleasantness to make a full statement on this subject:

'The *Spectator* never expected a very high numerical sale, for it never formed its plan with that object, or descended to the arts by which it is attained. The price alone must shut out our journal from the market of the populace, and the subjects treated of, the manner in which they are treated, and the absence of scandalous reports and indecent news, are equally distasteful to the rich vulgar. In addition to the drawbacks, our course has

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<sup>1</sup> 1 May, 1858.

not been one to stimulate circulation. We are the organ of no party ; we run counter to the prejudices of all parties ; and instead of lending our columns to the propagation of delusions, . . . we expose them on fit and proper occasions. Yet in spite of all these drawbacks, and all the open opposition and private backbiting of the Whigs, which we have encountered, not as an organ of a party, but as a power of ourselves, our circulation has steadily increased. . . . Here are the stamp returns.

	<i>Total stamps. Weekly average. Weekly increase.</i>		
1833 ( $\frac{1}{2}$ year) . . .	49,000	1,903	—
1834 . . . . .	101,500	1,953	48
1835 ( $\frac{1}{2}$ year) . . .	63,000	2,423	473
1836 . . . . .	142,000	2,730	307
1837 . . . . .	147,000	2,826	96
1838 . . . . .	158,000	3,038	212
1839 . . . . .	174,000	3,346	308
<i>Weekly increase, Jan. 1834 to Dec. 1839, = 1,443.</i>			

‘ The influence of the *Spectator* is irrespective of the number of copies printed and purchased ; it arises from the class of minds it operates upon, and from its influence more or less direct over the views of other journals. . . . We are read, too (unluckily for our profits !) by many who do not *buy*—in too many reading rooms and clubs, by too many rich economists who make one paper pass through several families, and, no bad judges of the rationale of circulation, advertisers seem to understand all this. . . .

‘ This long disquisition has been forced upon us by a *systematic* attempt to injure this journal as a property—a property of no great value, it is true, but in the creating of which much money as well as labour has been spent.’

How closely Rintoul identified himself with his paper, and the pathetic intensity of his confidence and pride in it, manifest themselves in the outpourings which he dispatched from time to time to his friend William Blackwood. Blackwood may have

been amused—he may even have been a little bored—but he cannot have been annoyed by Rintoul's eager injunctions about advertisements—for Rintoul set great store by publicity. 'Help me to some publicity in the North,' he wrote on 7 July, 1828; and four months later: 'I am anxious to have the enclosed advertisement of the *Spectator* in the December number of *Maga*. . . . I hope you will allow me the three days of grace that have elapsed, when I ask them as a favour.' Whilst nearly a year later (16 September, 1829) he writes, and firmly underlines, '*You must contrive to give me a lift in your October number*. It will be of great service at this very season.' In return, he reviewed *Maga*, and noticed her whenever possible, zealously playing the game of editorial log-rolling.

The anxiety which underlay his defiant confidence appears in a letter written on 2 December, 1828:

'It encourages me much to hear so experienced and acute an observer as yourself predict so confidently the *Spectator's* success. Next to ultimate success, a tolerably rapid rate of increase is desirable. You will see at a glance that the cost of production, as compared with other newspapers, must be very great; and that it will require a very large circulation to remunerate us. This, I think, we ought to command, as soon as the true character of the paper is known. The greatest favour any friend can render us is to assist in extending that knowledge.'

By September, 1829, both notes—of exaltation and of anxiety—had reached a higher pitch of intensity:

‘ I am much gratified by the encouraging and kind interest you continue to take in the *Spectator*. The circulation is very considerably higher than when you were in town, and it keeps up—with a tendency to increase—which no other paper in London does at this season of the year. Still, it is *far from paying* ; and I repeat in confidence, what I foresaw and told you nearly a year ago, that its success would be a question of resources. The undertaking, planned on a great scale, and for long endurance, must be of slow growth. It must succeed, and greatly too, if I can provide the funds, say for a couple of years longer. Its present success might suit an ordinary paper ; but mere ordinary success will not support the *Spectator*. The cost of production is much greater than that of any other weekly paper ; and the price is too low—it ought to have been 1s. instead of 9d.’

In 1831, accordingly, the price was raised from 9d. to 1s., while the number of pages was at the same time increased from sixteen to twenty-four. But, judging by the stamp returns of 1832, quoted above, this change did not prevent an increase of circulation.

The type was always clear, and the arrangement admirable. Towards the end of 1831, slight changes were made in the headings, and roomier type was introduced ; but at the same time a regrettable concession was made to the fashion of Gothic lettering.

From the beginning, the *Spectator* was acutely conscious of its position as a member of a powerful Press ; and theories about the functions and obligations of the Press were from time to time expounded in its columns. Rintoul held with St. Loe Strachey,



that the journalist is ' the watchdog of society ' and ' that the journalist's business is publicity '.

Indeed, he even used the watchdog metaphor :

' It is one of the misfortunes of public journalists to be thrown upon a perpetual state of cavil and objection. Defenders of the public interests, they are forced to ferret out and seize upon whatever threatens the general good ; to anticipate evil ; to fight against oppression, and to be still in arms. If they are a pack of nasty snarling dogs, who is it that makes them so ? In short, political journalists, like doctors, live by the evils they seek to remove.'

A favourite theory expressed in the early files is that the newspaper is first of all the mouthpiece of public opinion. Rintoul was furious at being told in April, 1831, that his paper had been ' dictating to bodies of electors ' as to who should be their candidates at the approaching election.

' This old accusation must have originated with the English Carlists, . . . who will not comprehend that " journalism " is nothing but the expression of public opinion. A newspaper that should attempt to dictate must soon perish. Every now and then, indeed, a journal is started for the enforcement of some opinion not accepted out of the narrow circle which establishes the paper. But the speculation invariably fails, both in a political and in a pecuniary sense. Dictation is hateful to all the world ; and a newspaper cannot dictate, because if it dictates it dies. True, many a newspaper *appears* to dictate—as *The Times*, in its late " *thundering* " articles against the poor boroughmongers ; but to call this dictation, would be like saying that it is the hatchet and not the woodman who fells the tree. Newspapers are but an instrument to express the opinion of their readers on either side of whatever may be in question ; and, taken all together, where the Press is free, they constitute the public voice.'

The *Spectator* had no patience with those who underestimated the influence and importance of the Press. Talking of the year 1831, one article pointed out that

‘a circumstance quite unknown to history must be taken into account—namely the Press, free, enlightened, active and powerful, beyond all comparison with former times. . . . The Press gives activity, concert, organization, confidence, and finally irresistible power, to the national will. *The Press has preserved the peace.*’<sup>1</sup>

When discussing a speech of Lord Althorp’s, in which he had said that he had no time to read newspapers, the *Spectator* snapped :

‘The tone in which newspapers are usually mentioned in the House of Commons is absurd. Men who cannot breakfast without one, in the evening pretend to be hardly cognisant of the existence of such things. Men who in private life look to them almost for their sole stock of opinions, are found in public sneering at their contents ; thus despising that with which they are crammed to the very mouth, so that they can hardly speak without betraying the source of their information. . . . They (newspapers) . . . are far above the contempt of Members of Parliament in ability, and in power are scarcely beneath the Honourable House itself.’<sup>2</sup>

There was still more to be said about Parliament and the Press, and the *Spectator* said it with arrogant delight :

‘The Members of Parliament are for ever clamouring against the Press, and acting on its suggestions. This mock indepen-

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<sup>1</sup> 14 May, 1831.

<sup>2</sup> 17 September, 1831.

dence and real subservience, while it amuses, gratifies us. We are content to be feared, for we look to fear as the only true principle of obedience.’<sup>1</sup>

Further an especial enmity was detected between newspapers and the House of Peers, who ‘are chiefly remarkable for the excellence of their cooks, and their hatred of the Press.’ Nor could it see any good reason ‘why a discussion that has been heard out in the journals and there settled, should be awakened again in the Lords. . . . It may be the misfortune of journalists to see things somewhat more clearly, and express their views somewhat more intelligibly, than Lords for the most part do. An hereditary ignorance of reason and of grammar, we admit, makes no part of the hereditary privileges.’ Therefore ‘let them repeat their own arguments a hundred times over, but there is not the slightest necessity for repeating ours.’

Rintoul’s pride in himself and the Press included a sense of the highest obligation and responsibility.

‘We are not of the number of those who hold that the Press ought to be allowed to do as it pleases. The weapon which journalists wield is a heavy and a sharp one, and asks for cautious handling. If, instead of dealing their blows on the guilty, they will fell the innocent, it is most just that they be made amenable for their blundering and wickedness. Where the charge is definite, where the Tribunal is unimpeachable, let the Press, when it does wrong, answer for its conduct. We fight at an advantage. Our

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<sup>1</sup> 10 March, 1832.

persons are commonly unknown and unapproachable ; we are practised in our fence. An individual has small chance with us. As we are powerful, we ought to be merciful.' <sup>1</sup>

It was by such a code of journalistic deportment that the *Spectator* conducted itself ; but it enjoyed only one year of peaceful impartiality before the great question of Reform made a call on every public-minded person to decide which party he would support. Rintoul, we are told,

' was a Reformer both by conviction and sentiment. He was no party man, but here was a national not a party movement. The sympathies of all his most valued political advisers were with the Reform movement. After mature and dispassionate reflection, he came to the conclusion that, as a journalist, it was his duty to throw himself into the scale of Reform. From this conclusion some of his own connexions who had aided in the establishment of the *Spectator* dissented. This did not cause a moment's hesitation on his part. Arrangements were made for buying up their interest in the concern, and the *Spectator* pronounced for Reform.' <sup>2</sup>

On 21 May, 1831, there appeared a clear statement of its reasons for this change of policy, in an article addressed ' To our Non-Political Readers '.

' We have more than once observed, that it is very difficult to be a *mere* spectator in times like these. . . . We are like Quakers who, excited by an emergency, have doffed our drab-coats, and, in shirt sleeves, careless of our golden mean, have descended into the arena to struggle for the dearest interests of the country. It is sometimes *criminal* not to take a side. . . . When the Parliament is reformed, and the constitution renovated, we intend

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<sup>1</sup> 7 May, 1831.

<sup>2</sup> 1 May, 1858.

to have our names inscribed, like those of active churchwardens, upon the amended structure.'

There follows a facetious promise of a change of heart when no great cause demands the paper's attention :

'We shall then once more be entitled to our own character of *quiet* and intelligent—of a pleasant companion, who knows all that is passing, and yet offends no one by taking up any side with uncomfortable warmth—misrepresenting no cause, and irritating no private feelings—an accurate observer for the gentlemen, a sage adviser for the ladies—a political thermometer, a fashionable barometer—with plenty to say and to tell on all sublunary subjects, from Russia to rape seed, from Raphael to a Ribbon. . . . But let us earn our repose.'

Yet Rintoul enjoyed a political fight better than peaceful annals. Perhaps one may describe him as a progressive Radical. He hated Tories, he used and rather despised Whigs ; but his sometimes gross invective and satire against politicians are no denial of his constructive zeal for measures ; and on behalf of the poorer people he was always an ardent reformer with some of the gifts of the seer.

In 1834, for instance, he fiercely resented the brutal trial and transportation of twelve Dorchester labourers for illegally administering oaths to the members of their Union, and led the paper to discuss the whole position of Unions and their relation to the State.

'The oaths taken by Orangemen and Freemasons are illegal, but no one dreams of transporting Orangemen and Free-



masons for seven years. No—the Dorchester men were in fact punished for combining to raise the price of labour. This was their crime. They were also punished as an example to others. This was their misfortune. Now what a wretched state of the law must that be, under which such things can be done ! The Legislature a few years ago repealed the laws against combinations ; but a judge has still the power of inflicting a severe punishment upon combinators, under pretence of punishing them for an offence of a different kind. This is very characteristic of the hypocritical way in which men speak and act in England.’<sup>1</sup> Moreover, the trial ‘ proves how deeply the spirit of resistance to what is ignorantly supposed to be the determination of all employers and capitalists to grind down the workpeople has taken root in the land. Almost every class of mechanics, and now, it appears, the labouring peasantry, discern the advantage of acting in concert to obtain a common end. Unfortunately, they are at present too partially informed to understand the difference between impracticable and obtainable designs. Their combinations have consequently been productive of only distress to themselves, and loss and inconvenience to their masters. With the progress of education, we may look for an improvement in this respect ; and then the spirit which impels men to form Trades Unions may be productive of much good.’<sup>2</sup>

The *Spectator* could not share the public’s panic at the menacing Unions ; and when they had a procession to show their sympathy for the Dorchester martyrs, the *Spectator* remarked that it ‘ was a manifestation, not of power, but of weakness ’ ; though such strength as there was ‘ lay in the sincerity, the earnestness, with which the poor men expressed their sympathy with the sufferings of their fellow-labourers.’<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> 5 April, 1834.

<sup>2</sup> 22 March, 1834.

<sup>3</sup> 26 April, 1834.

In 1838, disgusted with court intrigue and party pettiness, the *Spectator* despairingly fell back upon *the People*, writ with a larger P than before. They deplored any 'fierce and noisy advocacy' of the popular cause, for—

'it is not enough to state truly the grievances under which the classes, thus uniting for redress, labour, if justice is not done to the moral character of the most patient, good-tempered people on the face of the globe. The Radical Press, for the most part, represents the feelings, not of the People themselves, but of the leaders of the People,' 'who are never the representatives of their patience, but of their impatience.' 'The labouring classes in England . . . are by nature peaceful and contented, and respecters both of property and authority . . . to say that they are easily led by political quacks and charlatans is a gross libel on their character and intelligence,' for 'they can only be moved inasmuch as they can be convinced. . . . Remember that those who flocked to hear the unknown tongues a year or two ago, in Newman Street, were not labourers and mechanics, but your carriage-company.'<sup>1</sup>

There is much prophetic wisdom in Rintoul's insistence that the growing power of the People must not be ignored :

'The more the People become entrusted with power, the more it becomes an object of interest to estimate and determine their capacity for exercising that power with discretion. Statistics will not avail us here ; the question is one rather *moral* than political. . . .

'The whole basis of opposition to popular demands—avowed by the Tories, and entertained, with ill-concealed fears, by the Whigs—is the moral inference which is drawn to the prejudice

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<sup>1</sup> 6 October, 1838.

of the People ; the belief in the encroaching, grasping nature of their disposition. It is thought that they may not stop short at the point where justice may be rendered to them, but may rise in their demands and become insolent and unreasonable in proportion to concessions. Tories and Whigs are here both in the same moral. Bullies are cowards, so are *sneaks*.' <sup>1</sup>

Taking ' a general survey ' of the present state of public affairs, the *Spectator* believed that

' we are at this moment only on the threshold of a series of political changes, the tendency and effect of which will be gradually to transfer power and property from the present holders to those of the industrious classes—in other words, to reduce the enormous disparity of fortune existing between the extremes of society. Let us whisper a moral in your ear, good landed gentlemen : there must be more men of a hundred a year, and fewer of sixteen thousand, before these changes can terminate.' <sup>2</sup>

Moreover

' paternal governments—in the sense of governments that are to enjoy entire freedom from responsibility, and to give, in return, their good will and charitable services to the People—are at an end in this country. The people want no more such *fathers* ; they have ceased to be *children*. Having now " grown-up," and shown themselves independent, . . . they have alienated the affections of their superiors, and must depend on their own exertions. . . . That a People with the habits of industry and love of quiet so strongly characterizing the English, should be found year after year agitating, combining, threatening—cannot be considered in any other light than as reflecting deep, indelible disgrace on the Government of the time.' <sup>3</sup>

As for the *Representation of the People*, it ' is an

<sup>1</sup> 13 October, 1838.

<sup>2</sup> 20 October, 1838.

<sup>3</sup> 3 November, 1838.

experiment which has never yet been tried in this country'.<sup>1</sup>

Of Chartism he wrote :

' This fearful disturbance of the inferior classes, now for the first time fully conscious of their own inferiority and of their own power—this sure consequence of bestowing human knowledge on the brute creation, and still treating them as brutes,—this, the most important fact of our times, is, by some, spoken of with contempt and derision.'<sup>2</sup>

And there is real political wisdom in his alternative to coercion. ' Suppose we should try a free trade in corn ' ; and finally, ' if the people should still be overcrowded, why not enable some to obtain land and plenty in other parts of the Empire ? ' <sup>3</sup> He was indeed, as we shall see, a real pioneer of what we now call Empire settlement.

In 1842, in reply to a ' Puzzled Admirer ', the *Spectator* laid down its social creed in black and white :

' We think our countrymen might be rendered more comfortable in their circumstances, were industry liberated from certain trammels and shackles, and if they could be persuaded to disperse themselves more equally over the immense regions which belong to the British people. We believe that if the material condition of the people can be improved, their craving for knowledge will be rendered more sharp. . . . We dislike everything that strengthens the spirit of *caste* : we do not fear evil consequences from granting political privileges to the great body of the people. Perhaps we are too unimaginative to be

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<sup>1</sup> 3 November, 1838.    <sup>2</sup> 1 June, 1839.    <sup>3</sup> 15 June, 1839.

dazzled by rank and station and their attendant shows ; but we cannot sympathize with the morbid dislike which some entertain towards them. . . . For a desirable end we will co-operate with any man, and we will labour in vain with nobody.’<sup>1</sup>

Later he wrote :

‘ What the Chartists, what all the working classes want, is a larger share in the elective franchise, higher wages, more of social and political consideration. Natural wishes these, and not quite unreasonable. You cannot either decently or safely meet them with a direct refusal.’<sup>2</sup>

He said of 1848 that it ‘ was the year of the New Revolt, the Revolt of the Spirit against the Letter ’ ; the revolt against that Respectability which ‘ had “ made things more comfortable ” and had quite forgotten wild primordial human nature or vagabond want ’.<sup>3</sup> And after its threats collapsed he had an equally wise view of the future Communism ; and some sentences read as if written to-day. He urged his readers ‘ not to be frightened at a word ’. For just as at one time the word ‘ Radical ’ ‘ handed over the patriotic politician to be pilloried by the Populace ’, so now ‘ the word of the day for producing political terror is “ Communism ” or “ Socialism ”.’ ‘ Communism,’ explains the article, ‘ is not a system, but a *principle*. . . . Political economy has declared that the great stimulus towards the creation of wealth is in the two spurs of want and competition. Com-

<sup>1</sup> 17 August, 1842.

<sup>2</sup> 8 April, 1848.

<sup>3</sup> 24 December, 1849.



munism denies that dogma, and if it made the laws would abolish individual property.'

What could be sounder than the following passage, written in 1849?

'We cannot shut our eyes to the fact that the doctrine exists and obtains a support too respectable to be overlooked or slighted. A vast living inchoate revolution, which is in its tendency more subversive to the present social institutions than any that the world has *yet* witnessed, exists in unknown strength and numbers throughout the most intelligent part of Europe, "biding its time"—awaiting the peaceful propagation of its doctrine, if that be rapid enough, or else an opportunity for a rough establishing by fire or sword.'

In England itself—'it would probably be found to be the prevalent *philosophy* of the working classes'; and therefore 'you must perforce regard it as a symptom, either of some great unsatisfied impulse of human nature, or of some defect in our present system, which provokes a corresponding counter-action.'<sup>1</sup>

Through all the thirty years of his administration, Rintoul kept his paper free of party machinery and personal fads or fancies. But the views are more interesting, to-day at any rate, than the news, and they keep their freshness surprisingly.

<sup>1</sup> 15 September, 1849.

## CHAPTER IV

### TOWNSEND AND HUTTON

Rintoul retires. An interregnum. Mr. Scott's editor. The *Saturday Review*. Townsend in India: his career. He buys the *Spectator*. The arrival of Hutton. Friendship with Maurice and Bagehot. Metaphysician and journalist. His epitaph.

AT the end of thirty years of editing, Rintoul was tired and old and decided to sell the paper. For a generation he had maintained the quality of the paper he had created, increased its circulation and value, though not exorbitantly, and consolidated its influence. It was respected—and feared. Within three years of its foundation, as we have seen, it was strong enough to frighten the opponents of the great Reform Bill, well entrenched though they were in national prejudice.

The sale was effected in 1858, but of the Mr. Scott who purchased it almost nothing is known—perhaps he deserves to be forgotten—and all that is recorded of the price is that Rintoul accepted an annuity as one part of the payment. The sale seemed likely to be the death-blow of the paper as

of its founder. Rintoul died four months after he had begun to enjoy his leisure, at the age of 71. The parallel with the surrender of the *Spectator* by Mr. Strachey seventy years later is, as we shall see, close and sad.

For that one short period in its career the *Spectator* lacked what Rintoul had given it supremely, character and purpose. Thornton Hunt, the son of Leigh Hunt, who was appointed editor, had considerable journalistic talent, at any rate in the eyes of Rintoul. Not a great deal is known about him ; but there is extant one autobiographical letter written by him in the course of an application for some Government appointment. Leigh Hunt apparently had written to Lord Lytton on the subject, who asked Forster about Hunt's career. His first association with Rintoul was on the *Colonial Gazette*, which was published on Wednesdays from the *Spectator* office, taking some part of its matter from the *Spectator*. The probable date was 1841. In that year, according to Hunt, ' Rintoul took his first holiday for thirteen years, entrusting the first page of the *Spectator* and the editing of the political part to me.' At this time Rintoul wrote very little with his own hand and dictated very little, unlike St. Loe Strachey, who produced rather more when he began to surrender writing for dictation. But the less he wrote, the more he controlled ; and though

Hunt was writing himself a testimonial it is probably true enough that ' throughout—he, a man of natural reserve and scrupulous honour, treated me with an ever-increasing confidence '.

We may infer that Hunt was a good journalist, but a bad editor. Probably he improved the quality of the contributors. Two of them were Archbishop Whately and the editor's father, Leigh Hunt ; and among gossip about the change in the tone of the paper, was a suggestion—for which some very slender internal evidence may be found—that it was subsidized for propaganda purposes by Louis Napoleon. But cleverness is not enough for newspaper success. At the same time that the intention and purpose of the paper began to wane, a dangerous rival appeared in the *Saturday Review*, born in 1855 ; and its gay cynicism enjoyed no little vogue. To some minds it was a relief to be told that ' nothing is new, nothing is true, and nothing of any importance '. But as a rule one paper does not destroy another. Papers wilt and die from their own proper maladies ; and the *Spectator* was in a consumptive condition when Mr. Scott, whoever he was, sold it to Mr. Meredith Townsend. With his coming, the paper was reborn. Townsend had unquestionable editorial genius and considerable experience of life in general and newspapers in particular. More than this, by a splendid im-

promptu act he took as friend and partner, to play Jonathan to his David, a man who was strongest where Townsend was weakest. In newspaper history the names of Townsend and Hutton are at least as indissolubly joined as Delane and Walter.

Townsend was born in London in 1831, and educated at Queen Elizabeth's Grammar School, Ipswich. When at the age of sixteen he became an usher in an obscure Scottish school, there was little hope that he would achieve 'self-expression' and fame. But he had a good family friend in John Clark Marsham, who was editor of *The Friend of India*, and he had also courage and enterprise. So that when Marsham offered him the post of assistant editor, he did not hesitate, but went at once to Serampore. Here he more than fulfilled Marsham's hope for him ; for he was editor of the paper at the age of 21, and in 1853 was sole proprietor and almost sole contributor. Lord Dalhousie, the Viceroy, acknowledged the influence that Townsend exercised through his paper, and wrote in 1856 to thank him for the fairness 'with which you have always set your judgement of my public acts before the community whose opinions are largely subject to your influence'. And again, in 1857, he thanked him for standing by him 'at a time when, literally (*sic*) fettered and gagged, I am deprived of all power of defending myself'. A







further tribute was paid to his knowledge of Indian affairs by his appointment to be correspondent to *The Times* ; but he was unfortunately at home at the outbreak of the Mutiny, when his wisdom and influence were most needed.

He returned to a warring and sullen India towards the end of the year, however, and was confirmed in his constant belief that our dominion there, if not actually unjustifiable, was precarious and contrary to the laws of sense. For

‘ it is a thing which exists and is alive, but cannot be accounted for by any process of reasoning founded on experience. It is a miracle as a floating island of granite would be a miracle, or a bird of brass which flew and sang and lived in mid-air. It is a structure built on nothing, without foundations, without buttresses, held in its place by some force the origin of which is indiscoverable, and the nature of which has never been explained.’ <sup>1</sup>

In 1859 his health failed again, and he was ordered to return permanently to England. He was eager to find some sphere of influence, and actively enjoyed responsibility and risk ; so that when he found, in 1861, that the *Spectator* was in the market, he bought it, undeterred by the fact that it had fallen on evil days. A few months later Bagehot introduced Hutton, and the two men must immediately have found many points of contact, and established a real understanding, but the suggestion of partnership

<sup>1</sup> *Asia in Europe.*

was apparently made quite suddenly, without any preliminary skirmishing, or tentative feeling of the way. The legend runs that

‘ after a conversation between the two men one day in the office of the *Spectator*, Hutton had taken his leave, and was half-way down the stairs, when Townsend called after him, “ I say, have you got any money ? ” The conversation was renewed on different lines, and it was arranged that Hutton should become joint editor and have a part share in the paper. The impulsive proposal may have seemed unbusinesslike, but it only seemed so ; it was the genuine and logical consequence of conversations which had been pleasing to both men and which had made it evident to Townsend how each would supplement and draw out the other.’<sup>1</sup>

The life of the two editor-proprietors had been as great a contrast almost as their character ; and in each case the training had given impetus to the natural bent.

Richard Holt Hutton was born in 1826 in Leeds, the son of a Unitarian minister, who reared him in that faith and thereby unfitted him for admission to Oxford, Cambridge or the King’s College, London. But there remained University College, the ‘ godless ’ foundation of Lord Brougham, which was attracting many brilliant young Nonconformists in the early forties, and which was probably the most important factor in Hutton’s growth as a philosopher. He himself has written of University College in his

<sup>1</sup> J. B. Atkins, *Nineteenth Century*, October 1923.

memoir of Walter Bagehot, with whom he there began a lifelong friendship :

‘ Some will regret that Bagehot did not go to Oxford ; the reason being that his father, who was a Unitarian, objected on principle to all doctrinal tests, and would never have permitted a son of his to go to either of the older universities while those tests were required of the undergraduates. And I am not at all sure that University College, London, was not at that time a much more awakening place of education for young men than almost any Oxford College. . . . In those days London was a place with plenty of intellectual stimulus in it for young men, while in University College itself there was quite enough vivacious and original teaching to make that stimulus available to the full. . . . Of this, at least, I am sure, that Gower Street, and Oxford Street, and the New Road and the dreary chain of squares from Euston to Bloomsbury, were the scenes of discussions as eager and as abstract as ever were the sedate cloisters or the flowery river-meadows of Cambridge and Oxford. Once, I remember, in the vehemence of our argument as to whether the so-called logical principle of identity (A is A) were entitled to rank as a “ law of thought ” or only as a postulate of language, Bagehot and I walked up and down Regent Street for something like two hours in the vain attempt to find Oxford Street.’<sup>1</sup>

Although he won prizes in almost every branch of study, and a gold medal for philosophy, Hutton’s friendship with Bagehot was perhaps the most valuable prize that he won at college. He also retained contact with the outside world more than would have been possible at Oxford and Cambridge, and it was as a student that he first came under the influence of Frederick Denison Maurice. Maurice

<sup>1</sup> Introduction to Bagehot’s *Literary Studies*.



had been brought up as a Unitarian, like Hutton, but he had become a clergyman of the Church of England, and had not yet forfeited his professorship at King's College. Many years later, Hutton attributed Maurice's change of religion to 'an ardent yearning after a centre of more perfect union with others', and it was perhaps this sense of Christ's dual nature as a rallying-point for men, in God, that ultimately led Hutton himself away from his childhood's faith. However that may be, his contact with Maurice must have affected him profoundly, for Maurice was 'not only a great but *deep* heresiarch, whose fervour and intensity constituted the very danger of his fascination'.<sup>1</sup> Curiously enough, Meredith Townsend had also felt this compelling influence, according to T. H. S. Escott, who goes so far as to say that 'that divine had scarcely less to do with giving [the *Spectator*] its special *cachet* than had the proprietors themselves'.<sup>2</sup>

Hutton, however, was not yet dissatisfied with Unitarianism. In Heidelberg he acquired a taste for the pursuit of laborious philosophic reasoning; and he felt so much at home in the atmosphere of German thought that he went on to Berlin and to Bonn. Here he sat at the feet of Theodore Mommsen, who said of him afterwards—'That young man

<sup>1</sup> Obituary of Maurice, 1872.

<sup>2</sup> *Masters of English Journalism*.

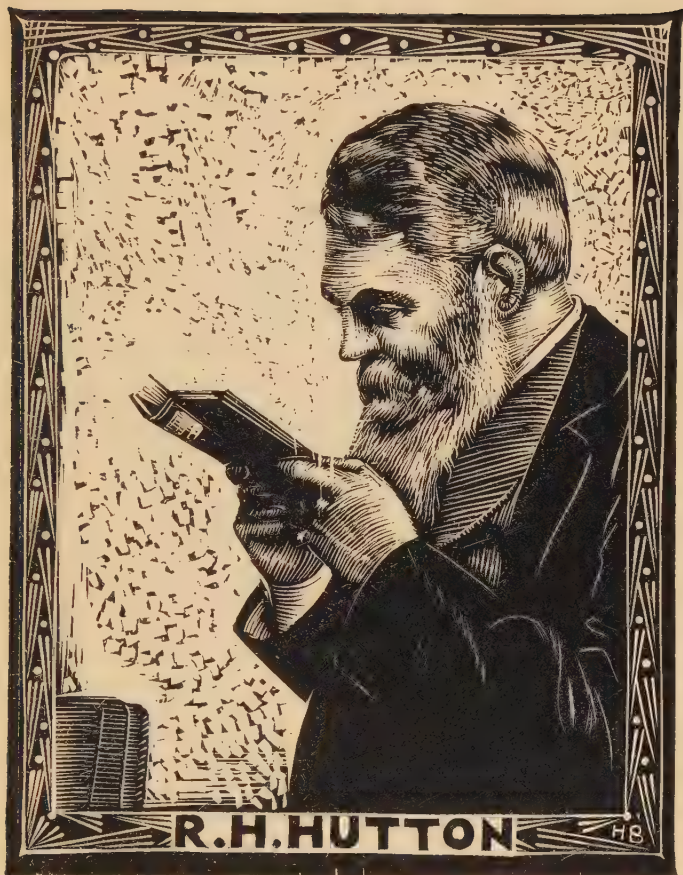
took away from my lectures not only all the knowledge I could give him, but much mental nutriment, for which he was indebted to his own genius.' When he had torn himself away from Germany, Hutton became editor of the Unitarian *Inquirer*, but he soon began to feel that he could not be cramped into any sectarian mould, and more than once gave offence by his outspokenness. His position became untenable and he retired. His health was at this time delicate, and he was ordered to journey to the West Indies, where his first wife, Anne Roscoe, died of yellow fever. On his return, he became joint-editor with Bagehot of the *National Review*, a powerful quarterly financed by Lady Byron, assistant editor of the *Economist*, and professor of mathematics at Bedford College.

However deeply Hutton plunged into philosophy (he was an original member of the Metaphysical Society), he kept an invincible zest for journalism. He wrote a good deal in such unlikely papers as the *Pall Mall Gazette*, to which he was very nearly appointed editor at its foundation in 1867. Indeed, one of the best of his many books, certainly the most lasting, was the volume called *Studies in Parliament*, composed of essays, mostly on the greater personalities, contributed to the *Pall Mall*. It reveals quite a different quality than the *Essays Theological and Literary*, mostly from the *Spectator*, published

in 1871 and edited by his friend Bagehot. But no other paper in London could have suited his talent quite so well as the *Spectator*, as edited by Townsend.

The long association came to an end when in 1886 Hutton went into retirement in a little house at Twickenham, not because he had had enough of journalism but, it is probable, for the sake of his wife, whose health was failing. He used to come up to the *Spectator* office to see his friends, but the visits grew fewer from year to year, as his own vigour abated. He died in September 1897, a few months after his wife. She was a cousin of his first wife and both were granddaughters of William Roscoe, the historian.

One who was present at his funeral wrote that 'round his grave were grouped Anglicans, Roman Catholics and Unitarians, in about equal numbers and in equal grief'. It is a unique epitaph.







## CHAPTER V

### A GREAT PARTNERSHIP

No. 1 Wellington Street. A portrait of Hutton. And of Townsend. Some contributors. Contrasted styles. The philosophic 'Middle'. Advice on religion. A summer holiday. Genesis and protoplasm. Newman's influence.

WHAT has been called 'the mid-Victorian synthesis' of these two famous editor-proprietors is worth some analysis. The best picture of the two men at work in the little office in Wellington Street was written in 1902 by Mr. Harry Quilter. It helps us to visualize both the men and their den; for Wellington Street was small, almost poky. It was said at the apex of the commercial prosperity of the paper, when its circulation and profits were nearing their highest under St. Loe Strachey, that one of his children was brought for the first time to the office. She had come to regard the *Spectator* as one of the greatest establishments in the greatest city of the world; and doubtless, with the ready imagination of a child, had set it in suitable surroundings. So great an organ could only be housed in a palace,

and she was taken to Wellington Street ! Her glorious dream was most cruelly obliterated. It did more than fade into the light of common day. 'Is this all ?' she asked. History does not recall the answer, but it might have been given in a few wise words spoken by Professor Max Müller at Oxford when there was some discussion about building a new grandiose home for one of the arts. 'Much,' he said, 'may be done in a hovel'; and the proposal fell to the ground.

No. 1 Wellington Street was not quite a hovel, but it was almost a huggermugger building, as a reminiscence by the chronicler will illustrate. In the absence of Mr. Eric Parker, the editor, he had agreed to edit for a month or so the *County Gentleman*, a country paper that Mr. Strachey had lately bought and installed in Wellington Street. A considerable parcel had arrived, and for want of room on the table was relegated to the top of a cupboard and forgotten. Soon after the proper editor returned ; it was noticed that the room was malodorous, and workmen were called in to take up the boards to see whether some mouse or rat from the river had died in obscurity. After their search had failed, the parcel on the cupboard was opened. It contained some pheasants' eggs on which the editor was requested to give an opinion 'were they or were they not fertile ?' He was able to answer that

when they reached his hands they certainly were not.

Only men in complete sympathy with one another could have endured the juxtaposition in space, apart from the extreme difficulty of the intellectual co-operation. Even those who never entered the primitive building, now vanished into a pretentious shop-front, will appreciate the little island and its inhabitants from Mr. Quilter's sketch. It begins with a portrait of Hutton :

‘ Perfectly fearless, entirely just up to his lights of honour, so unblemished that during a long life no one ever dared to whisper a word against him, essentially chivalrous, truthful and sympathetic, generous alike to causes and people needing help, and entirely disdainful of all base things, of self-seeking and of the uses of advertisement—that is high praise for any man. Nor is it one whit exaggerated. With all this, Hutton was by no means a milksop, and could be very angry on occasion. He kept discipline among his contributors with an iron hand ; personally speaking I never sat down on the little sofa in his office, to discuss a forthcoming article, without feeling that I had been “ sent for ” by the headmaster. He rarely or never altered articles, but rejected them without the slightest hesitation if he disapproved of their tone.

‘ His co-editor, Meredith Townsend, on the other hand, had far less of the moral basis, and when Hutton was away on his holiday would pass any article that was good enough from a literary point of view, and of an article he was a most admirable judge. He was a quaint, excitable, and exceedingly untidy little man, with his waistcoat half unbuttoned, and covered with snuff, which he took copiously the whole time, and he had a trick of speaking as if he were furiously angry on the slightest provocation. It was however a mild, fretful, spluttering sort of anger, quite different from the great roar of Hutton, and to see the two

men together was curious indeed. Imagine a thin elderly lion turned into a short-sighted man, and set down at a high desk, writing busily, apparently with his nose as well as his pen, so closely was the head approached to the manuscript ; imagine, I say, this metamorphosed king of the beasts, writing at breakneck speed, with grunts and ejaculations, and continual replacement of an eyeglass, and tossing of its gray mane, and sheets of copy flying all over the room when they were finished ; and then fancy amid it all, a little roundabout brown figure, pacing incessantly up and down the little room, snuffing furiously, and talking with a brilliant exaggeration of statement that now and then provoked remonstrance, and now and then a shout of laughter from the seated figure. Fancy what it was for an imaginative boy to come in from the Strand to such a couple of masters, and to have his week's work planned out for him, and to know that with all their eccentricity and outward peculiarities, his employers were two of the cleverest men in England, and two of the most refined gentlemen in the world. Such were the editors of the *Spectator* as I knew them a dozen years ago.'

He said of the two in the same article :

' Differing from modern editors in many respects, they differed most of all in this, that they considered it of greater importance to express their personal opinions than to write what was pleasing to their readers, or calculated to increase the circulation of their paper. Nevertheless, strange to say, the circulation of the paper did increase almost yearly under their editorship. They were emphatically, to use racing parlance, "horses that could stay." Hutton was a deep and subtle thinker, a metaphysician by temperament and training ; Mr. Townsend . . . was one of the most brilliant historical and political leader-writers that ever served a weekly journal. In particular his articles on Eastern subjects, informed as they were by many years' personal experience supplemented by wide reading, were the best things of their kind in English journalism, and had a certain grandiosity of imagination, an amplitude of statement in perfect keeping with the nature of their subject-matter. For

the rest, the staff was in some ways a brilliant one : James Macdonell was on it, and Malcolm MacColl, of Bulgarian atrocity fame, now Canon of Ripon, and Herman Merivale, the dramatic author, and Mrs. Cashel Hoey, the novelist, who wrote, it is said, half Edmund Yates's novels, and Frances Power Cobbe, the humanitarian, kinder to cats than to her fellow-Christians, and Mrs. Barrington, who used to explain Watts and his paintings to all and sundry, and a younger member whom modesty forbids me to name, and many a brilliant occasional writer, who made an exception in favour of the *Spectator*, being by no means journalists by trade. But all of these, their personalities and their works, were merged in the strong influence of the editors. . . . In the days . . . from 1870 to 1895, the paper grew in circulation and importance yearly, till failing health and misfortune overtook Mr. Hutton, culminating in the madness of his wife, his own long-continued illness and later his death.'

Throughout their long association the two joint-editors and co-proprietors were in every sense complementary. In case of deadlocking opinions the ultimate control rested with Townsend, but according to Mr. Church, Townsend only twice exercised the right, and Hutton cheerfully acknowledged it. Both were hard workers. Mr. Hogben has said that they never averaged less than two articles each week, and though this is perhaps an exaggeration, it is certainly true that they wrote enough between them to fix the paper's corporate style. And their individual styles, although never disharmonious, were so different from each other and express so well the subjective and objective characters of the two men that they must be examined and criticized each in turn.



Now Hutton's style is, from the æsthetic point of view, deplorable, and his lengthy, overwhelming sentences have forced protests from many exhausted readers. The *Pall Mall* once complained of them that they 'went tottering on, bent double under their burden of thought'; and Alfred Austin said: 'The only epithet that properly describes this sentence, which mainly consists of a series of dashing indefinite adjectives, is muddle-speeched. . . . Why will the *Spectator* persist in always serving up its thoughts raw?'<sup>1</sup> Finally a later and cleverer critic has described his style as a 'voice which is as a plague of locusts—the voice of a man stumbling drowsily among loose words, clutching aimlessly at vague ideas.'<sup>2</sup> Yet the criticism is not fair, if only because it judges Hutton by standards not his own. The ideas at which Hutton clutched seem vague to Mrs. Woolf; but to Hutton and his readers they were quite definite.

Morley considered Hutton 'a fine English critic', and Gladstone even called him 'the first critic of the nineteenth century'. They said so because they themselves grasped perfectly and valued highly those concepts which Hutton was trying to frame in words. Even to-day, if we want an essential verdict on Wordsworth, for example, those who still read

<sup>1</sup> A. Austin, *Poetry of the Period*.

<sup>2</sup> V. Woolf, *The Common Reader*.

Hutton find it in his essays. To Morley and Gladstone as to Hutton's admirer, Mr. Hogben, 'it is not so much what may be called the bad art in Hutton, as the generous purpose and real but orderly enthusiasm, that one loves to dwell on.' Hutton's sense of humour only flashes out in the heat of battle, yet it is not a spiteful, cruel mirth, but rather a serious humour, designed to rout, not to torment. When, for instance, he ridicules Professor Clifford's thesis that the doctrine of Providence is immoral because it paralyses upward effort and nerves the arm of the fanatic, there is a rhetorical intensity in Hutton's very nonsense. 'Talk no more,' he mocks 'of sacrilegious beliefs, but only of the evil cellular tissues, the disgraceful foods, and the infamous air, leading to such beliefs.'<sup>1</sup>

Again, he laughs almost passionately at Carlyle's Pantheism, saying :

'When you put the "Eternities" and "Immensities" and "Abysses" in the place of God, you are very apt indeed to feel what a wonderful fellow you must be to "front the world and the eternities" in that grand way. There is nothing definite enough in "Immensities" to humble you. Pantheism is an inebriating faith.'<sup>2</sup>

Surely, the great Victorians laughed more seriously than they cried. But the *Spectator* laughed so seldom that Robert Louis Stevenson wrote to

<sup>1</sup> 1874.

<sup>2</sup> 1874.

Edmund Gosse in 1879 that wit was out of date and 'humour confined to the Scotch Church and the *Spectator* in unconscious survival'.

Townsend's nervous, vivid, almost violent style is much more readable; for where Hutton burrows into his own mind for proofs, Townsend looks outwards and finds striking illustrations from the pageant of life. Strachey has said of Townsend:

'It is my honest belief that he was, in the matter of style, the greatest leader-writer who has ever appeared in the English Press. He developed the exact compromise between a literary dignity and a colloquial easiness of exposition which completely fills the requirements of journalism. He was never pompous, never dull or common, and never trivial. . . . Where Townsend excelled and was easily first was in his power of dramatic expression and what can only be described as verbal fascination. No one could excite the mind and excite the imagination as he did. And the miracle was that he did it all the time in language that appeared to be nothing more than that of a clever, competent man talking in his club. He used no literary artifice, no rhetorical emphasis, no elaboration of language, no *finesse* of phrase. His style was easy but never eloquent or precious or ornamented. It was familiar without being commonplace, free without discursiveness, and it always had in it a note of distinction. What was as important, he contrived even in his most paradoxical moments to give a sense of reserve power, of a heavy balance at the Bank of Intellect.

'He never appeared to preach or to explain to his readers. But though he had all the air of assuming that they were perfectly well-read and highly experienced in great affairs, he yet managed to tell them very clearly what they did not and could not know. He could give instruction without the slightest assumption of the schoolmaster. In truth, his writing at the best was in form perfect journalism.'

Sometimes, indeed, he was almost too dramatic in his writing, for

‘though he was never carried away by language, was never blatant and never hectoring, he was often much too sensational in his thoughts and so necessarily in the phrases in which he clothed them. He let his ideas run away with him, and would sometimes say very dangerous and even very absurd things—things which became all the more dangerous and all the more absurd because they were, as a rule, conveyed in what were apparently carefully-balanced and carefully-selected words. His wildest words were prefaced with declarations of reticence and repression.’

For though he led a quiet and ordered life, yet he was incurably romantic, always believing that life held fantastic adventures in store for him. ‘No man ever loved the dramatic side of life more than he did. He even carried this love of drama to the length of honestly being inclined to believe things simply and solely because they were sensational.’ Nor did he break his enthusiasms gently to his readers, for ‘what he liked was definiteness’ and ‘qualifying words were an abomination to his strong imagination’.

Although he delighted to fabricate uncompromising generalizations, it is on the other hand true to say of him that ‘the specific statement was his leading rule in journalism: you should always be specific even if you cannot be accurate, might be given as an accurate parody of his principles’. For he rated the artistic value of a concrete statement

above its merely factual value, and contrived to endow even statistics with picturesque force by an odd juxtaposition of unlikely factors ; thus—‘ half the centenarians of the world are negroes.’

But although Hutton and Townsend wrote in so different manners the corporate style of the *Spectator* survived, because the two men both wrote in the service of the same ideas. T. H. S. Escott writes in his *Masters of English Journalism* of

‘ the intellectual power, the moral earnestness, and the capacity of apposite and world-wide illustration possessed by Hutton and his colleague’, and recalls how ‘ during the second half of the nineteenth century, Oxford undergraduates reading for honours in “ Greats ”, and perhaps too prone, as their tutors thought, to take for their essay models the “ middle ” articles which Douglas Cook had trained a long succession of writers to produce for the *Saturday*, were admonished carefully to examine and endeavour themselves to reproduce the political analysis, the closely linked chains of argument that were to be found in each successive number of the *Spectator* and, in the English press, nowhere else.’

Now although the ultimate control was Townsend’s, Hutton’s was certainly the greater influence ; and it was he who made the *Spectator* so high-minded and so serious that it was often dubbed stodgy and dull. But this seriousness was never impersonal, with the mechanical soundness of an institution, and if the *Spectator* sometimes judged pontifically it did not speak with the infallibility of the Holy See, but with the enthusiastic and fallible fanaticism of a Pope who is always a man. And for



many years this man was Hutton, who was not himself sure of the meaning of life or of its values ; but who was passionately determined to discover them and to help others by telling them, week by week, about the problems which confronted him.

Nor did Hutton confine his counsel to the pages of the *Spectator*, for he gave generously of his time and wisdom in the far more exhausting way of personal friendship. His correspondence was large in quantity and intense in quality, and he

‘ had intimate friends of nearly all schools of thought. Perhaps it has never before happened that Roman Catholics, Anglicans and inquiring agnostics have repaired, on occasion, to an editor’s office in the Strand with feelings somewhat akin to those with which the Savoyard went to St. Francis de Sales, for advice in perplexity or a stimulus to do his duty. And the memory of the rugged face—which sometimes compared to that of Socrates—at first so little encouraging, of the manner which might for a moment be mistaken for an uninviting brusqueness, will ever remain coupled with that of unfailing sympathy and high-minded counsel.’

Hutton’s personality was strong and was evidently well and vividly expressed in the outer man ; and it is therefore possible, with the help of photographs, to imagine his appearance and presence. Professor Murison, who worked as a reviewer under Hutton, wrote in 1925, saying :

‘ Imagine a dark-visaged man of apparent vigour, with black hair—head, moustache and beard—usually *ébouriffé*, a keen piercing eye and a decisive—perhaps commanding, perhaps

dictatorial—manner. But at the same time reflect that he *is* preoccupied with many things. And do not forget that he did kindly things, in a blunt fashion, perhaps, but he did them. If a “rough tyke” in appearance, he certainly had under the unattractive outside a warm, generous, affectionate heart.’

In his book called *Men and Memories*, Mr. A. J. Church (not perhaps always an altogether accurate observer) has left some notes on Hutton’s daily life. He tells us how Hutton did most of his reading and writing at his house in Englefield Green, holding the book or paper within an inch or two of his one good eye ; and how he managed the financial side of the paper himself—being an accurate man, and a good proof-reader. On three days of the week he would be in the office from ten until three-thirty or four, with no apparent midday interval ; and on Fridays he slept at the office, to see the paper safely through the press. He was not a great committee man, but he was on the Senate of London University, and often devoted a morning to the Girls’ Friendly Society.

His annual holiday of about six weeks was spent in driving in England or on the Continent ; and records of some of these tours, varying in liveliness and interest, were contributed to the *Spectator* from 1867–76. Now these letters of ‘A Wife on her Travels’ are entered in the British Museum catalogue under the name of Mrs. Hutton ; and in reading them it seems a simple matter to delimit her

eager, exaggeratedly feminine and amusing accounts of misadventures by the way, from his philosophizing raptures over the wonders of nature. But Mr. Church, professing intimate knowledge, laughs at such crude criticism, saying that ‘as a matter of fact, every syllable of “the Holiday Rambles” was written by Mr. Hutton. And no critic need be ashamed of being taken in, so admirably done was the deception.’ And the critic who writes this, far from being ashamed, continues obstinately to believe that Mrs. Hutton wrote the livelier portions of the book and especially those that speak of her husband’s personal peculiarities.

‘He has a large beard, and is horribly short-sighted and looks like a bookworm. . . . I am convinced Goethe-reading and German Universities are very bad training for practical Englishmen. Poor dear Edward! he has a lot of cobwebs somewhere at the bottom of his dear addled old brain!’

There is one contribution, however, which was almost certainly Hutton’s own—namely a poem on *Roseg Glacier*, which alludes significantly in its concluding lines to the religious and scientific controversies in which he became deeply engaged:

‘such dreams of fevered brain  
As wise men conjure now from sky and sod,—  
That Love shrinks back from Law’s advancing reign,—  
That the Ice-sea of science threatens God.’

Both Townsend and Hutton, as their successor

St. Loe Strachey, were deeply interested in religion ; and were far enough from any dogma to agree with one another. There is a charming anecdote told by Townsend of himself that soon after he entered the office he asked Mrs. Black (the then reigning housekeeper of the *Spectator* office) what was her particular religion. ‘ I expected to be told that she was either Church of England or Chapel or Presbyterian or something of the kind. To my surprise this is how she met my inquiry. She looked me straight in the face and said “ I am a moderate atheist ” ’—and by that name, we are told, she always went in the office. Townsend had always a touch of Eastern mysticism ; Hutton was essentially a philosopher, but he too towards the end touched a mystic chord. The point is alluded to in the delightful portrait of Townsend sketched by his successor. He wrote :

‘ Though I did not go nearly as far as he (Hutton) did in the matter of spiritualism I had deep sympathy with his main attitude in regard to things psychological. It was this fact, perhaps, which made him say to me, half humorously but half in earnest, when he knew, as I also knew, that he was leaving the office to die, “ Remember, Strachey, if you ever write anything of me in the *Spectator*, I will haunt you ! ” ’

But religion was more present with Hutton than the others. It would have been an impiety for Hutton to have kept his religion and his journalism in water-tight compartments ; and his determination

to discuss week by week the host of new problems which were troubling his readers and himself, widened the *Spectator's* appeal, and heightened its prestige.

During the 1860's the importance of politics was rivalled by a new preoccupation—the relation between science and religion. It requires an effort of the imagination now to enter into the panic spread by such books as *The Origin of Specics*, and *Essays and Reviews*, and to understand the earnestness with which Hutton appointed himself 'the opponent, from a very broad theological standpoint, of the scientific and agnostic creeds which he strove judiciously to understand'.<sup>1</sup>

Hutton served both the paper and the public by making the *Spectator* a help—even a necessity—to thousands of people who, while sufficiently intelligent to be disturbed by the new science, yet had

'faith enough to bridge the chasm  
'Twixt Genesis and protoplasm.'

Gladstone held that it was 'one of the few papers which are written in the fear and love of God'.

Hutton fought the Darwinians, but did not come down on the side of either the apes or the angels. He was broad-minded enough to admire his opponents John Stuart Mill and even Huxley and

<sup>1</sup> Oliver Elton, *Survey of English Literature*.



to see clearly both the virtues and defects of Maurice. The poet whom he most loved was Wordsworth, delighting in his 'keen spiritual courage and his stern spiritual frugality'. His devotion to Cardinal Newman was intense to the point of idolatry and is not altogether easy to explain; he admired perhaps not so much his religion as his penetrating intellect, his secluded and unworldly mode of life, and his saintly character. And when he died, Hutton wrote of him as 'a white star extinguished; and sign vanished'.  
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'never surely was there an intellect which combined a happier and more delicate insight into the concrete side of life, with a larger and more daring grasp of its abstract truths, and of that fine and intricate middle region which connects the logic of facts with the logic of the understanding.'<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> 1890.

## CHAPTER VI

### ST. LOE STRACHEY

A country education. Oxford friends. First contributions. Succeeding Asquith. On the staff. The *Cornhill*. Sole proprietor. *The County Gentleman*. Growing prosperity. Strachey versus Rhodes. Colonel Pollock's scheme.

IN a human reference the *Spectator's* days were bound each to each as naturally as the days of an individual life. The enrolment of Hutton by Townsend was delightful, in form and substance. The enrolment of Mr. John St. Loe Strachey was equally instinctive and unpremeditated, though not quite so sudden. He has told the tale himself in very bright narrative.

Like many another, he wavered between the law and journalism ; but he was a journalist from the cradle, and his upbringing urged him rather to letters than law. He was born on February 9, 1860, the second son of Edward Strachey, the head of the family, settled at Sutton Court in Somerset, who had married a sister of John Addington Symonds. His refined, scholarly and broad-minded parents brought him up with as few restraints as

possible upon his self-education in their library, and everywhere else where his eager, acquisitive mind explored. He did not go to any public school, and the better part of his education was conversation with his father, a man of wide and various culture, and hours in his library, where he browsed eagerly and from which he carried away a mass of varied knowledge.

‘The result,’ as his biographer in *The Times* wrote, ‘was an unconventional lad, who went up to Balliol with a mind full of literary and other knowledge, and totally unaware of the ordinary discipline that helps or hinders the usual schoolboy. He had the advantage of living for a time with his uncle and aunt, Professor and Mrs. T. H. Green. He never understood Jowett and the Balliol dons of the time, nor was he understood by them. Academically his Oxford career was undistinguished, although it ended with a first class in history ; but it was a time of ripening knowledge and of benefits from friendships with such men as Sir Herbert Warren, Dean Beeching, and, the most intimate of all, Sir Bernard Mallet, who more than anyone else probably restrained his intellectual vagaries and leavened them with sound common sense, especially in matters of politics and economics. The omnivorous passion for literature never flagged, and one of the contemporary rhymesters, copying H. C. Beeching’s well-known verses on the Oxford men of their day, wrote :

I am Strachey, never bored  
By Webster, Massinger or Ford ;  
There is no line of any poet  
Which can be quoted, but I know it.

The last two lines were a fair hit, for all through life he was one of the readiest and aptest of quoters, though often inaccurate. From Oxford he came up to London to read for the Bar and to

let his energies expand in journalism. He wrote for the *Saturday Review*, the *Standard*, the *Economist*, and other papers and magazines. In 1886 he first edited a paper, the *Liberal Unionist*, in conjunction with Mr. Charles Graves, who was later his right-hand man on the *Spectator*, and in 1896 Mr. George Smith appointed him editor of the *Cornhill*.

‘ But his life work was the *Spectator* ; and his pride in it never lost intensity. When he set out in his last years to write an autobiography he named his first chapter “ How I came to the *Spectator*,” and left such smaller details as his birth and life as a boy and young man to come later. “ The pivot of my life has been the *Spectator* and so the *Spectator* must be the pivot of my book, the point upon which it and I and all that is mine turn.” ’

His father had been a frequent contributor and was a friend of the joint-editors, and his own first contributions were—of all things—two sonnets, published in 1875 and 1876. In the last days of 1885, after settling in London to read for the Bar, he persuaded his father to give him an introduction to the editors and went to see them in Wellington Street. With more politeness than zeal they graciously permitted him to take away two books for review, one of which was *Gulliver’s Travels*. To his great amazement the proof came back almost at once and the review was duly published. It was then the custom to return books as soon as the proofs were corrected, and the young journalist walked off to Wellington Street with the books under his arm. With proper modesty he explained that he had not come to ask for more work but to

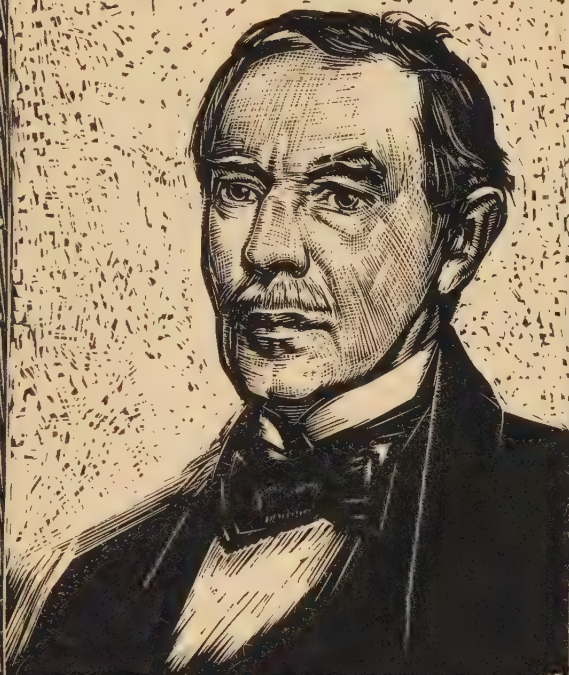
return the books and thank the kind editors. Again to his amazement Mr. Townsend said that

they hoped very much that I should be able to do regular work for the *Spectator*. Mr. Hutton chimed in with equally kind and appreciative words, and I can well remember the pleasant confusion caused in my mind by the evident satisfaction of my future chiefs. I was actually hailed as "a writer and critic of the first force".

'To say that I returned home elated would not be exactly true. Bewildered would more accurately describe my state of mind. . . . I honestly think that what I liked best in the whole business was the element of adventure. There was something thrilling and so intensely delightful to me in the thought that I had walked down to Wellington Street, like a character in a novel, prepared for a set-back, only to find that fate was there, "hid in an auger-hole", ready to rush and seize on me. Somehow or other I felt, though I would not admit it even to myself, that the incident had been written in the Book of Destiny, and that it was one which was going to affect my whole life.'

A year later a third amazement issued from Wellington Street in the form of a letter from Hutton, saying that his co-editor had gone away for his usual summer holiday, and that he wanted some one to come and help him by writing a couple of leaders a week and some of the notes. When he went to accept, Hutton explained that Mr. Asquith, who up to the end of 1885 had written a weekly leader and also helped in holiday time, had 'severed his connection with the paper owing to his entry into active politics'. His first leader was 'an exhortation to the Conservative side of the





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**J. ST. LOESTRACHEY**



Unionist Party not to be led into thinking that they were necessarily a minority in the country, and that they could not expect any but a minority of working men to be on their side'.

'The article had an instant reaction. It delighted Mr. Townsend, who, though he did not *know* it was by me, guessed that it was mine, and wrote at once to ask me whether, when Mr. Hutton went on his holiday, I could remain to act as his assistant. Very soon after he suggested, with a swift generosity that still warms my heart, that if I liked to give up the Bar, for which I was still supposing myself to be reading, I could have a permanent place on the *Spectator*, and even, if I remember rightly, hinted that I might look forward to succeeding the first of the two partners who died or retired and so to becoming joint-editor and joint-proprietor.'

His second leader was not less successful. It was on the Privy Council, and by a fortunate chance it was definitely quoted and taken as text for a speech made by Lord Granville to a special deputation; and the fact pleased Hutton as much as the other leader had pleased Townsend. Later he wrote an obituary article on the Rev. William Barnes, whose poems he had stumbled on accidentally a year or two earlier, and they had filled him with love and admiration. His notice drew the attention of Canon Ainger, and approval from this source 'served to drive the nail up to the head and to make Mr. Townsend and Mr. Hutton feel that they had not been rash in their choice, and had got a man who could write on literature as well as on politics'.

The bargain was sealed by a black cat.

‘Not being without a sense of superstition, at any rate where cats are concerned, and a devout lover of “the furred serpent”, I may record the last, the complete, rite of my initiation at the *Spectator* office. While I was one day during my novitiate talking over articles and waiting for instructions—or, rather, finding articles for my chiefs to write about, for that very soon became the routine—a large, consequential, not to say stout black tom-cat slowly entered the room, walked round me, sniffed at my legs in a suspicious manner, and then, to my intense amazement and amusement, hurled himself from the floor with some difficulty and alighted on my shoulder. Mr. Townsend, who loved anything sensational, though he did not love animals as Mr. Hutton did, pointed to the cat and muttered dramatically, “Hutton, just look at that!”

‘He went on to declare that the cat very seldom honoured “upstairs” with his presence, but kept himself, as a rule, strictly to himself, in the basement. Apparently, however, the sagacious beast had realized that there was a new element in the office, and had come to inspect it and see whether he could give it his approval. When this approval was given, it was conceded by all concerned that the appointment had received its consecration.’

Soon afterwards Mr. Townsend wrote a letter offering Mr. Strachey a definite post and salary, and more than this, promising that the first of the partners who died or retired would offer him a half-share of the paper. It was pointed out that this might mean a long apprenticeship, though it was more likely to mean a short one. ‘It proved to be neither the one nor the other, but what might be called a compromise period of some ten years.’

During these years Mr. Strachey did much other work. In 1896 he was appointed editor of the revived *Cornhill* by Mr. George Smith ; but after two years was forced to resign the post, much as he enjoyed it. 'The *Spectator* soon claimed me for its own,' as he said ; and very little later he had to carry the full weight of editorship. Hutton's death in 1897 was followed by Townsend's retirement from active editorship, though he continued to contribute ; and so Mr. Strachey became not only sole editor, but sole proprietor. And he was more than that. He was also general manager, chief leader-writer, and an ardent reviewer. Into each and every department he put immense energy ; and by the force of it quickly drove the *Spectator* to an unimagined height of economic prosperity. Its circulation more than doubled, and its revenue. It maintained itself as a centre of political influence and greatly excelled its past as a commercial success. Strachey had not been a writer on the *Economist* for nothing. He was as good an economist as he was a historian and politician. And he thought things out. He studied 'the ethics of journalism' and after his retirement wrote on the theme with a good deal of force. He considered it to be the journalist's especial duty to play the watch-dog, even if the barking might annoy the neighbours ; and as illustration gives a long account of his duel



with Cecil Rhodes, a man whose ways and personality he did not like, and perhaps did not fully understand. His energy, variety of interest, and very definite point of view made him a great editor through the bulk of his reign. Like Townsend, he was lucky and wise in choosing for his right-hand man a colleague who had complementary qualities. This colleague was Mr. C. L. Graves. They had worked together in early years on the *Liberal Unionist* and again on the *Cornhill*. Strachey wrote of him in *The Adventure of Living* : ' All who know him, and especially his associates on *Punch*, will, I feel sure, agree with me that no man was ever a more loyal colleague. No man also has ever succeeded better than he in combining scholarship and vivacity in humorous and satiric verse.' That is true, but C.L.G.'s contribution to the *Spectator* was more than his writings, whether of notes, musical criticism, verse or reviews. His fastidious carefulness and conscience preserved every number of the *Spectator* from slips whether of taste or accuracy. His presence at the office gave Strachey absolute confidence that enabled him to spend what time and energy he liked in working for the paper from outside, and in concentrating on its policy. Mr. Graves too gave up the *Cornhill* after a while, lest it should be thought that the work of a reviewer and a publisher's man clashed, and concentrated

the better part of his energies on the *Spectator*, except for his contributions to *Punch*.

Mr. Graves introduced to the staff Mr. J. B. Atkins, who had made a name as an admirable descriptive writer and note-writer in the *Manchester Guardian*—that great nursery-home of journalists—though he had by that time left it to join the *Standard* under Arthur Pearson. He was to prove as notable a pillar in the continuity of the *Spectator* as anyone in its history. He was virtually editor throughout the very difficult period of the War, when Strachey chiefly busied himself with other things, and continues to-day to write the notes of the week with a clearness and neatness of touch scarcely paralleled elsewhere. A regular and much valued contributor in both prose and verse was Mr. Stephen Gwynn.

An interest in country life, though he was never a naturalist, always induced Strachey to recognize the value of natural history in journalism. For a while he owned and edited in Wellington Street the *County Gentleman*. It did not in itself prove a success, but it gave scope to two journalists who were of great value to the *Spectator*. One was Mr. C. J. Cornish, a master at St. Paul's School, who was peculiarly successful in making natural history read like news ; and remains quite unrivalled in his vein. His books on the Thames and the

New Forest and on the Zoo still retain their first interest. The other was Mr. Eric Parker, the present shooting editor of the *Field*.

As time went on Strachey—perhaps because he dictated more and wrote less with his own hand—grew more careless, and perhaps too conversational, in much that he wrote ; but the *Spectator* maintained its quality, its independence, its freshness. Anonymity remained one of its outstanding attributes. It spoke with its own force ; and contributions from men of fame, of whom Lord Cromer was one of the most frequent, were only to be distinguished by internal evidence. Their influence was not perhaps less on this account. Till near the end, it was always Strachey's view that ' the delicious notoriety of the individual is the ruin of the better political journalism '. Yet the popularity of the paper was perhaps largely due to the very evident individuality of the proprietor, both in its strength and its *naïveté*. The correspondence grew crisper and more various, and became one of the paper's chief distinctions. There was nothing in any contemporary to compare with it.

The *ex cathedra* manner, buttressed by an undying pride in the paper, annoyed some readers, as its occasional excess in enthusiasm annoyed others. *Punch* wrote of ' the fond *Spectator's* booming ' at a time when Mr. William Watson was hailed week

after week as the heaven-sent poet. A reference to the letters in the *Spectator* giving examples of animal intelligence could always draw a laugh; and even as late as 1925 Mr. Stephen Leacock extracted great fun from the theme in his parody of various English newspapers. Indeed he seldom wrote anything funnier than his *Spectator* letter about the appearance of the rare bird, *Pulex Hibiscus* !

But till the date when the war fell, the *Spectator* remained almost without a serious rival—at any rate in circulation—among London weekly papers.

Strachey himself quoted his fight with Cecil Rhodes—especially over the gift of £10,000 to Mr. Parnell—as one of the worthiest deeds of the *Spectator*, and both in the paper and in a stiff personal interview with Rhodes, he proved to the hilt his courage, independence and public spirit. But the public remembers better the more positive, more constructive activities. For example, the writer of his obituary notice in *The Times* makes no allusions to the barking of the watchdog, that, in Strachey's view, every good journalist should be. He considers that the *Spectator* reached its apex when, in opposition to the Tariff Reform movement, it preached the doctrine of Free Exchange (as Rintoul had preached the abolition of the Corn Laws). It was then a much stronger influence in the land than any other weekly paper, and was

perhaps the only weekly taken seriously throughout Great Britain, and in the United States. It 'was the vehicle for the introduction of many of Mr. Strachey's schemes, apart from criticism of current events; for instance the *Spectator* Experimental Company, by which Colonel Alsager Pollock was able to prove before the war that soldiers could be intensively trained in six months, the scheme for registering ex-soldiers or "veterans" by which in 1914 thousands of trained men were readily found; and the Cheap Cottages Exhibition of 1905, also backed by the *County Gentleman*'. At the very end he strongly supported by active measures as well as sympathy, a 'Homecrofting' experiment on the edges of Cheltenham. Like other great journalists, including Lord Northcliffe, he believed in doing things as well as writing words.



## CHAPTER VII

### THE WAR AND AFTER

Excess of drama. High Sheriff of Surrey. 'My American tea-parties.' A physical breakdown. Mr. Wrench takes a share. The return from America. The new proprietor announced.

THE war brought to an end one chapter in the career of the paper. St. Loe Strachey was a man who lived vividly, almost excitedly. He laughed, very delightfully, at his friend Townsend's yearning for excitement : and gives with gusto many examples. He records how Townsend once said to him in a period of political calm, in the middle of August in the nineties, 'Strachey, I wish something dramatic would happen.' But to Strachey himself something dramatic was always happening, however dull the external world ; and when the tragedy of the war filled the stage, he suffered from a plethora of drama. Strain and excitement almost killed him. He had often enough warned the public of the war, for he was of Lord Roberts' school ; but when it came his prophetic spirit was not schooled to a

Stoic endurance. He yearned to do more than man could. 'He threw himself into fresh work with feverish enthusiasm and such keenness as almost seemed to those who did not understand him to be enjoyment—which it certainly was not.'

The spirit in which the prospect of war was accepted did honour to the paper ; and some of the early pronouncements have something in them of the insight and grasp of real statesmanship. On August 1 it was written :

'If war comes . . . Britain must stand by her friends and also declare war. In a condition of things so terrible we should be most careful to keep our eyes upon what must always be the object of war. The object of war is to defeat the enemy—to win. You cannot have war with a limited liability. . . . What do these principles mean to us ? They mean that as soon as it becomes clear that war cannot be avoided we must at once take the initiative with crushing force wherever we can make our will effective. We must begin with mobilizing our sea and land forces, and send an expeditionary Force to assist the French, i.e. to act with and under the French Generalissimo in defence of the French Frontier. There must be no isolated action of ours in Belgium.'

Wisdom born not of journalism, but of long historical study, informs much of the comment during the early part of the war. The editor saw the issue clearly and as a whole, and expressed his beliefs with courage and unvarying directness, and sometimes with historical imagination.

His zest in history appeared in other places too.

The real Strachey is charmingly expressed in a notice he put forth with great promptitude in Surrey, giving a lead to the counties.

‘The King’s Commission to me as Sheriff requires me—I quote the actual words—to take the custody and charge of the said county and duly to perform the duties of sheriff thereof during His Majesty’s pleasure, whereof you are duly to answer according to the law. One of these duties as laid down in the text-books of the law is to call upon all men of the county of military age to repel the King’s enemies. To that duty I now address myself.’

He had been elected High Sheriff of Surrey in 1914; for he had taken great interest in local affairs since he built his house at Newlands Corner. But the double work was too much for him. Both in London and Surrey he tried to do the work of many men. He broke down and had to leave the *Spectator* to those who had helped him for many years. His illness became so severe that it was considered mortal. He faced death with courage, and, as his biographer in *The Times* well said, with that curious interest in anything new or unknown which he had shown all his life.

‘Then, by a combination of medical skill and good fortune, his life was saved. He seemed to grow physically well again, except for a liability to exhaustion and to attacks of influenza and kindred ailments. His readiness to accept a new world after the war was evident; his remarkable sympathy with everything young returned. But he was not the same man as before. Though he seemed as keen mentally and as eager as ever, his

powers of concentration never fully returned. His readiness to accept new ideas seemed to run to extreme lengths, so that he could be drawn along lines that his stronger judgment would have refused to follow and sometimes upon incompatible lines.'

For long periods, during the war and after, the chief burden of the paper was taken by Mr. J. B. Atkins, and the work became all the harder after that 'Præsidium columenque rerum', Mr. C. L. Graves, retired. It is a nice question whether as editor or contributor he did the higher service.

Strachey sacrificed himself, and to some extent the paper, on the altar of his own excess of energy; but he did invaluable work during the war. It may be truly said of him that he died for his country. Those who know the United States, know that without Strachey the misunderstandings between this country and that would have been much more serious than they were. Hearing that American correspondents in London were being recalled to New York in a sort of disgrace, because they could get no news of the war, Strachey conceived the idea of asking Mr. Asquith (the leader-writer whom he had succeeded on the *Spectator*) to meet the journalists at his own house, 14 Queen Anne's Gate. This led to a weekly foregathering, to which Strachey, whose acquaintance and influence were large, invited some Cabinet Minister or other person of importance and inner knowledge to

meet the American journalists and ‘put them wise.’ The meetings were a salient success, and it will never be known how great an influence they exerted on American opinion. The correspondents felt they were being trusted and were without exception punctilious in keeping confidences intact. ‘My American tea-parties,’ as Strachey called them, had the same sort of effect as Lord Grey’s talks with Mr. Page. And they sucked vitality from the editor as his more crucial struggle from the Ambassador. Strachey was not an immediate victim. His energy indeed seemed greater than ever. He wrote more and more, books as well as articles; but he ‘managed’ less. Some of his work on the *Spectator* was taken up by his son and daughter who helped to introduce new features, especially in the criticism and printing of modern verse. The single whole-hearted control vanished, and a certain confusion of ideas and aims, not wholly compatible with one another, ensued. The *Spectator* was obviously losing some of its old atmosphere of unity and stability, to the distress of many clients of the older school. But the paper never lost its vogue and influence overseas; and this was in some ways extended by the appearance in 1922 of a weekly column of notes on Imperial affairs. These were written by Mr. Evelyn Wrench, the founder of the Overseas League, and the English-speaking



Union. He did more than write : he presently took over from Strachey a small share in the paper and helped in the management. In 1924 Strachey finally decided to give up the editorship and managership for at least a period to Mr. Wrench.

A new and almost boyish desire to write books, which included two volumes of autobiography, and a novel, was associated perhaps with some fear that his grip was failing. At any rate in 1925 he permanently parted with the proprietary control to Mr. Wrench, who presently, in accord with a tradition of three generations, became also editor and chairman of the Company. The fourth chapter of the *Spectator's* long history had begun.

In the autumn of 1925, after the arrangement had been made, but not yet published, Strachey paid a visit—a most energetic visit—to the United States. In his absence the news began to leak out in various inaccurate forms, and the essential fact had to be confessed. So immediately on his return Strachey—in the issue of December 19, 1925—contributed a fuller account of the transaction to put himself right with the readers of the *Spectator* to whom his letter was directly addressed. It has a certain historical value in the annals.

#### TO THE READERS OF THE *SPECTATOR*

I feel that I ought to explain why the news of my retirement (not indeed from the *Spectator*, but from its control and govern-

ing proprietorship) did not appear first in these pages. It was arranged between me and my able and most loyal and friendly successor, Mr. Wrench, that the announcement should not be made while I was in America, but be postponed to the middle or end of December, by which time I should have returned to England. The knowledge, however, that an inaccurate and unauthorized statement was about to be published made it necessary to state the exact position while I was still at sea, and leave over my personal announcement till to-day—the earliest moment at which it could appear in the *Spectator*.

I have three things to say directly to the readers of the *Spectator* :

(1) I am not severing my connexion with the paper, and not taking leave of its readers. I shall continue to contribute though I shall be freed from the responsibilities of control. That will pass to Mr. Wrench as owner of a majority of the ordinary shares in the *Spectator* Company. My proprietary interest in the paper will still be a large one, but chiefly in the shape of preference stock.

(2) I am retiring from the control of the paper, *not* for reasons of health or through any disagreement with the *Spectator* public, but because I desire to be free from office work and to be able to devote much more time to travel and to literature rather than to the routine of journalism. The working proprietor of a newspaper cannot have the opportunity of leisure. But a proprietor who does not work must necessarily sterilize his newspaper.

(3) The passing over of the control to Mr. Wrench does not, I desire to point out, in any way partake of a sale of the paper in the open market. I have had over three years' experience of Mr. Wrench as a colleague and know that there is no risk of his altering the character of the paper or of letting it pass into unworthy hands. He means to prevent all risk of this by adopting *The Times* model. Mr. Wrench and I are absolutely at one in thinking that the most important thing that can be done in these days by any British organ of opinion is to maintain the sense of fellow-service and of good will throughout both branches of the English-speaking race. I, therefore, hand him the torch without fear or hesitation—though not without trial and experi-

ence of his powers and aspirations both at the *Spectator* and in the English-Speaking Union.

J. ST. LOE STRACHEY.

His spirit was too keen, and his hopes too high to confess to failing health ; and he persuaded his friends to hope. His contributions were vigorous as ever, though a little intermittent for the last three years of his life. His last article appeared in the *Spectator* six months before the end of his vivid life. He died in London after a short illness on August 26, 1927, at the age of 67.

And how did it come about that Strachey, in choosing a successor in the relay race, decided to hand the staff to Evelyn Wrench ? The story has something of the friendly charm of the preceding successions. It is best told in Mr. Wrench's own words, written *currente calamo*, so that nothing extraneous might interrupt the simplicity of the plain narrative.

The following is his answer to the question, how he came to join the staff of the *Spectator* :—

‘ In the summer of 1921, Mr. St. Loe Strachey asked me to join the staff of the *Spectator* and to take on the business direction. I first met him in the autumn of 1903, when staying with the late Lord Northcliffe at Sutton Place and at one time saw a good deal of him, both at Sutton Place and at Newlands Corner, his home at Merrow Down. During the war, we rather lost touch, but after the war I met him on several occasions, and our friendship was as cordial as ever. I think our chief bond was the fact that we both cared deeply for America, and both were

continually working for the object of improving the relations between the two sections of the English-speaking race.

When in the summer of 1921 Strachey asked me to take over the business side of the *Spectator*, which was then in a not too flourishing state, I told him I was afraid I could not do so, because at that time the development of the Overseas League and of the English-Speaking Union required all my spare energies. A year later, Strachey again renewed his invitation. The sales of the *Spectator* had been steadily falling since the war and had come down to a weekly figure of 13,500. It was clear that the financial outlook was serious, and Strachey was distinctly alarmed as to the future. This time I decided to accept his invitation, invested a small sum of money in the paper and agreed to become Business Director. Our agreement was finally settled in the library at Newlands; and that talk will always be remembered as a landmark in my career. I have always felt proud to think that my connexion with the *Spectator* is due to no efforts on my part, and that I occupy the editorial chair because Strachey invited me to do so.

‘Knowing my interest in English-speaking friendship, Strachey suggested that I should supply a signed article to the *Spectator* each week called “The English-speaking World,” a feature which I contributed for several years, but finally gave up owing to lack of time.

For two-and-a-half years I was a member of the Board and worked under Strachey. I shall never cease to look back with pleasure to the fact that on no single occasion did we have any disagreement, although on various occasions I felt that the position was not satisfactory, because I saw mistakes being made which it was not possible for me to alter. A little over two years after I joined the *Spectator*, in August 1924, Strachey asked me to come and dine with him at the Belgravia Hotel, and then told me that as his son had joined the Labour Party, he was anxious to safeguard the future of the *Spectator* and to part with the control. He felt that it would be safe in my hands, especially as he knew how keen I was on two subjects to which he was especially devoted: British-American friendship and disinterested management of the Drink Trade. He also knew that I was not

a party man myself. He asked me if I thought I would be able to find £25,000 in cash, to purchase the control of the Ordinary shares of the *Spectator*.

‘To cut a long story short, on January 1st, 1925, Strachey appointed me Editor-in-Chief and Managing-Director, giving me a year’s option on the paper. By Easter I decided to exercise my option, and at the end of July 1925 the transaction was completed and I became Chairman of the Company and Editor-in-Chief.’

The annals of the *Spectator* are full of surprising parallels. The sudden rise of circulation, and other things that go with circulation, which marked the first year or two of Strachey’s single control, were almost exactly repeated 21 years later in the years following Strachey’s retirement. On this point Mr. Wrench supplies a postscript.

‘At the end of 1924, the circulation of the *Spectator* was about 17,000. In 1926 an auditor’s certificate was given for 21,500, a figure which has since been slightly exceeded. The sales of the *Spectator* are, therefore, to-day, as high as they have been at any time during its hundred years, with the exception of the year 1903, when they were between 22,000 and 23,000.’



## PART II—THE PAPER

### CHAPTER VIII

#### THE FIGHT FOR REFORM

Political parties in 1830. The *Spectator* as a Cobbett. A reformer's litany. The Duke of Wellington, and Lord John Russell. A libel action. Threatened revolution. Abusing the Lords. Lord Grey resigns and returns. A proud victor.

UNDER its first editor-proprietor, as under its second and third, the *Spectator* fought one great political battle, for conscience sake. The fight for the Reform Bill was to Rintoul what the championing of the North was to Hutton and Townsend.

It has been recorded that Rintoul set out hopefully on a neutral course, but he had too much of the mind of the Reformer and the man of action not to feel that 'it is sometimes criminal not to take a side.' And he proved himself the possessor of one of the greatest of editorial gifts. He could come down like a ton of bricks when occasion demanded.

Party politics in 1830 had place for nothing but

partisanship. Tories had come by a good deal of ridicule in the House by first passing the liberal Catholic Emancipation Act, and then declaring, in the King's Speech, that the British Constitution was exalted above criticism. There was a certain relentless element in the party, which expressed itself in the characters of its leaders, in the great Duke of Wellington, who had disciplined his mind out of all elasticity, and Peel, whose smile, said O'Connell, was 'like the silver plate on a coffin'.

The Whigs, on the other hand, radiated a tepid but genial humanity. Their internal relations were as warm, and sometimes as hot, as those of one big family; and one family—'a proud and somewhat haughty race'—did indeed form the nucleus of the party. For Lord Grey, 'that most dignified of modern nobles', a high-principled aristocrat of the old school, was now the leader of the party; and his lieutenants were his ambitious and unintelligent son, Lord Howick; and his great son-in-law, Lord Durham.

Another Whig of a different stamp was Lord Melbourne, a great courtier, who was at his ease anywhere, simply because he liked to be at his ease. Lord Holland, gouty but genial host, was a social asset to the party. Palmerston was useful to keep the Continent quiet while his colleagues carried measures of which he really disapproved. Althorp

contributed his popularity, and Stanley his eloquence; Lord John Russell was serious and eager. Finally there was Henry Brougham, aggravating, brilliant, unreliable, and exigent, who must be appeased because of his popularity.

The Radicals in Parliament—like John Arthur Roebuck, Hume and Burdett—could do little because they were few in number. They could only make themselves heard by making themselves objectionable, which they did most conscientiously. Their real power lay outside Parliament, where their friends, such as Cobbett, Place and Fonblanque, were quietly marshalling the unrepresented forces. For the triumphs of this age were achieved by the powers outside Parliament, using it unconstitutionally as an unwilling tool. So the Catholics had been emancipated by the threatening Catholic Association; and now the Trade Unions, the Birmingham Association, and the unorganized masses were demanding that they should be governed by a sentient body, instead of by an inaccessible and rusty machine. As Wakefield wrote in the *Spectator* (4 June 1831), they were ‘so ignorant as to believe that the evil under which they labour will be suddenly cured by an Act of Parliament for changing our system of Representation’.

It was the nation outside Parliament that really

mattered in the crisis of 1832, and it was by influencing that nation that the *Spectator* played its big part. It became almost a Radical personality like Place or Cobbett, and never merged its individuality in the wider but weaker personality of party. It supported the Whigs because only the Whigs could carry Reform ; but as it never became their organ, it remained free to criticize them in the name of the independent, thinking public.

The Reform battle was fought for relatively small changes. The enfranchisement of the £10 householders was certainly a wide, if not a very advanced, measure ; but the rest of the Bill, and the part over which the hottest feelings were aroused, was devoted to the destruction of an accumulation of small abuses. It is so obvious now that Old Sarum should have been deprived of its members, and Birmingham have been given representation, that the smallness of the measure makes it appear very remote. But to contemporaries, its very smallness made it less remote ; it ' brought it home ' to them with the intensity of a concrete thing. And men were so stupefied and blinded by the propinquity of small abuses, that they nearly sacrificed the bigger issues to save them. The House of Lords ran some risk of being offered up on the altar of Old Sarum.

There were two parts that a new and uncom-

promised paper might play in such a struggle. It might ally itself firmly and safely with one party, sticking to it through everything, and extolling the details of its measures. Or it might expound wider theories, and judge detailed reforms merely as means to an end. And the *Spectator* decided from the first to stand clear alike of the support and of the limitations of the party bond ; it backed the Whigs when they pursued the course of justice and good sense, and roundly abused them for any sign of back-sliding. Parliamentary reform was merely the sharpening of a weapon ; for ‘ the Nation wants good laws and the instruments wherewith to obtain good laws are good members of Parliament ’.<sup>1</sup>

As Greville wrote in his journal : ‘ The History of the Bill, and the means by which it has been conceived, brought forward, supported and opposed, will be most curious and instructive ’, and this history can be entertainingly followed in the pages of a contemporary newspaper. From the very beginning—the fall of Wellington’s ministry in November 1830,—the *Spectator* took up the cause of Reform with deliberate and deadly seriousness, which its occasionally facetious sallies only deepened. The paper never lost its head ; but this balance made it doubly liable to lose its temper,—for it could lose it in two directions—towards its foes,

<sup>1</sup> *Spectator*, 19 March, 1831.



and towards the timidity and slackness of its friends. It always tried to avoid the thumping of resounding but empty tubs ; and provided its subscribers instead with a deal of solid reading. In October, 1830, for instance, it declared ‘ We have no cause to make out—no theory to uphold ; our only object is to state facts, as far as they are ascertainable.’ And on this basis the paper takes its stand as the vigilant and critical spectator, whose business is to watch and to warn Parliament and Public alike, whenever it sees anything that it disapproves. For, ‘ in the ensuing Parliament, there will be more questions of importance discussed (and some of them settled, if our anticipations are realized) than in any other that has met for perhaps a hundred years. No Parliament ever contained a greater number of members who promise well, or more whom we are disposed to trust. *But we are determined to watch them !*’ And that no one’s misdeeds may be overlooked, a list of members is given, classified according to their relations to their constituencies, and to the Upper House. These Tables, in spite of their avowed impartiality, read almost like a Reformer’s Litany, thus—From the Relations of Peers, from Placemen and Pensioners, from Officers in the Army, and from Country Gentlemen, Good Lord deliver us ! Next week it is noted with ingenuous delight that—‘ The Parliamentary Tables

which we published last week have produced a sensation.’<sup>1</sup>

On 6 November, after the Duke had made his boastful and blundering speech, the *Spectator* summed up in striking phrases the two great principles at stake. The first axiom that—‘if the people cannot claim on principle a right to make Members of Parliament, as little, we think, can members not chosen by the people claim a right to make laws’,—was at the root of the coming redistribution of seats. While the need for an extended franchise was stated in an article named (from a Tory principle) ‘Representation of Property’—‘Labour’, says the *Spectator*, ‘is property ; it is that which gives to land all its value. Again, *intellect* is property of the highest and most imperishable character. God knows, of intellect, the legislatorial power is small enough.’

Such was the Cause, and the *Spectator* had no doubt about its rightness ; but it was less certain about the men on whom the measure depended.

‘Rarely—perhaps never—did Ministers assume the reins of government with such prospects or such responsibilities. It remains to be seen whether, after a career devoted to the pursuit of petty and personal objects, they will fall to pieces amidst ridicule and rejoicing—or whether they will throw themselves at once upon the people, and create an imperishable monument to

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<sup>1</sup> 30 October, 1831.

their own glory, by improving the institutions and advancing the prosperity of their country.’<sup>1</sup>

They hoped that the greatness of the measure would rouse the men from their lethargy and limitations ; but they were suspicious of the family compact within the Whig party.—‘ We are not quite convinced that the days of patronage are passed. The nepotism, manifested in Lord Grey’s appointments, does not warrant this conclusion.’<sup>2</sup> And the new year begins on a note of sober and patient hope—‘ The history of 1830 is the history of the progress of national liberty and public opinion. The way of happiness is a quiet one : it lies by the great high road of public instruction : It is to be reached by patient thought, argument, and representation.’<sup>3</sup> At the same time, the corrected Tables of the House of Commons are delivered to the public, together with

‘ a mass of information in the shape of notes. . . . If England be at length to have a reform—if the promises of the Ministers, the prayers of the people, and the desires of the King, be not equally vain—we have given to our country the measure of information required for carrying reform into effect ; but if the bad system is still to be persisted in, *animam liberavimus nostram*—we have performed our duty by putting its iniquity on record.’

At the same time, rejoicing that ‘ in England in

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<sup>1</sup> 20 November, 1830.

<sup>2</sup> 18 December, 1830.

<sup>3</sup> 1 January, 1831.

1830, public opinion had those legitimate channels for the expression of the national will which are the true political safety-valves', the *Spectator* became high-flown about the possibilities of its own position as one of these safety-valves.

'The *Spectator* of the day should have the eyes of Argus, and must envy the hands of the well-armed Briareus ; and were we to amuse our fancy with an *auto*-portrait of an accomplished *Spectator*, duly prepared for the discharge of his duty for the commencing year, we would have him drawn a bundle of intelligence germinating hands and eyes in all directions—the hands springing out like the sons of earth, each armed with a pen.'

And again, less fancifully : ' Faithfully and painfully have we waited upon events for now nearly three years ; the last year was more especially a year of great exertion and agitating interest ; we discharged our duty to it, and are now girded to accompany the race of events.'<sup>1</sup>

Next week more tables were published to show ' the extent of the indirect influence of the Aristocracy over the Representatives of the People ', and it is pointed out that ' the information which we have acquired from the House of Commons returns, have been collected only by a devotion of time and labour of which our readers can form but a feeble conception. The Returns appear to be constructed on a principle of concealing the facts they are produced to declare.'<sup>2</sup> And the bitter conclusions

<sup>1</sup> 1 January, 1831.

<sup>2</sup> 8 January, 1831.

of all these researches are that ' the British Government is a machine for regulating the Army, the Navy, and the Tax-gatherers ', for ' the people do everything for themselves, and then give the Government fifty millions a year for doing the rest ' ;<sup>1</sup> and that ' the " harmony of our institution " means the obedience of King and Commons to the dictates of certain individual Lords ' .<sup>2</sup>

On 26 February, 1831, the *Spectator* gave a quite admirable summary of the growth of the popular demand for Reform, accompanied by some less admirable personalities. During the preceding years—

' Education had been spreading a general knowledge of the purposes of government. The guise under which bad government once flourished securely had been pierced by reflecting men ; the present generation of the middle classes grew up with strange notions of government, and liberality became with our young men the order of the day. But the Government remained barbarous, ignorant, and profligate, as before. Then came the necessary result—discontent, or utter distrust of the House of Commons, and hostility to the ruling few. The Duke of Wellington was popular because he declared war against the high aristocracy in Church and State, and because, being selfish, secret and obstinate, he vanquished and humiliated a faction which the nation already hated.

' The overthrow of Charles X did, we acknowledge, create a tumult either of hope or fear in the breast of every Englishman. It did more—it urged the Duke of Wellington to side with the Oligarchy against the nation ; and so it drove him from office.

' We are willing to admit that " dread of physical force " also

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<sup>1</sup> 5 February, 1831.

<sup>2</sup> 26 February, 1831.



may have served the cause of Reform. Thousands of moderate men declared loudly for immediate Reform, as a means of preventing Revolution.' <sup>1</sup>

Why, then, in the face of this intelligent activity,—  
' why such profound reserve on a matter of such deep and universal interest? Has not the country a right to examine and weigh *beforehand* what is of such vast importance to all? '

But after the Bill had been introduced by Lord John Russell on 1 March, the *Spectator* was overcome by confusion, and blushed for its past suspicions, however conscientiously expressed. It gave the 'grand outlines of the greatest, wisest, and best measure ever submitted to Parliament', and acclaimed it as

' a plan which must succeed. . . . We emphatically express our approval of the Ministerial plan of Reform. But we owe the Ministers something more than this naked declaration; for several weeks past we have preached against "confidence in the Ministers", and are bound to confess that not one of our suspicions has been verified'. <sup>2</sup>

Next week was an important one in the history both of the Reform Bill and of the *Spectator*, for it was on 12 March, 1831, that the paper first framed the famous slogan—'The Bill, the whole Bill, and nothing but the Bill.' Tremendous importance was attached to this phrase, by the *Spectator* at any rate, and on 16 April, after some supplementary Bills

<sup>1</sup> 26 February, 1831.

<sup>2</sup> 5 March, 1831.

had been introduced, they deplore that 'the phrase "the Bill, the whole Bill, and nothing but the Bill"', is no longer at the service of the Ministers. Further, the King is no longer "Reform BILL". The point of the pun is gone, and the *prestige* of the King's name is damaged'.

The poor King, who was smothered with flattery in the papers (which, Greville says, he never read) was at this time in high favour with the Reformers. And he reached his highest point in their estimation on 22 April, when he bustled off with Grey and Brougham to prorogue Parliament, without even waiting for the cream-coloured ponies to have their tails braided. This heroic venture was chanted by some doggerel in the next *Spectator*—

'Oh! shout for the triumph by Liberty won  
O'er the slaves, who the light of her loveliness shun!  
Oh! shout for the Monarch, whom now we behold  
The first in the ranks of her heroes enroll'd!  
Who but thrilled with delight, Britain's sovereign to see  
Proclaim the proud truth that his subjects are free!  
And, waving his sceptre, dissolve the dire spell  
Whence power was derived for a purpose of Hell!'

In this faery atmosphere, the cream ponies are almost transformed into the mice of Cinderella's coach.

A really exciting General Election followed on the King's wand-waving, and the results, as they came in, were recorded by the *Spectator* as being

for or against the King, the final result being a 'majority in favour of loyalty'.<sup>1</sup>—'The King of England is now *really a King* ; and the most powerful King, too, in the world. He has gained the hearts of his people. He will be all-powerful for good, and our second Alfred will not even permit others to injure his subjects.'<sup>2</sup> 'At length we know that the much-boasted "constitutional balance" of Monarchy, Aristocracy, Democracy, has never existed. The Revolution of 1831 takes power from the Aristocracy, and bestows it upon the King and the People.'<sup>3</sup>

But in its zeal, the *Spectator* allowed itself to speak too particularly of the Duke of Beaufort's great position, and of how he came by it, which provoked that nobleman into bringing a libel action against the paper. Rintoul made of this case an opportunity for asserting his belief that his paper had been fighting decently and fairly since the opening of the campaign.

'We have a more important consideration than our legal defence before the court—the necessity of endeavouring to satisfy our readers that we are morally innocent of the charge. . . . If there is any newspaper especially distinguished for its freedom from personality and slander, that paper is the *Spectator*. . . . Our journal was established to meet the wants of a class of readers who dislike the slanderous character of a portion of

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<sup>1</sup> 7 May, 1831.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>3</sup> 21 May, 1831.

the weekly Press ; and it has always been conducted on the principle, that personal slander is hateful to well-regulated minds, and unfit for admission into decent families. . . . We are on trial before our readers, by whose approbation we live.

‘ Let not our readers suppose that our anxiety to rebut a charge of slander will induce us to abandon, or to compromise for a moment, any one of our political principles.’<sup>1</sup>

This claim to aloofness from personal slander was made good by the *Spectator* ; for though it was scornfully abusive of those of whom it disapproved, yet its abuse was for the most part general. Such seems to have been the jury’s opinion ; for Rintoul kept his proud promise to his readers, and was at last justified, in June, 1833, by a verdict of ‘ Not Guilty ’.

‘ This two years’ prosecution was brought to an issue on Monday last. . . . We make a free and sometimes a bold use of the rights of discussion ; but we are far indeed from coveting the *éclat* of *libellers* ; and, as we have more than once declared, had not the least wish or intention to hold up the D. of B., or any of his family, to the especial reprobation of the public. . . . But the D., smarting under the then recent loss of his Borough power, and being in the hands of bad advisers, thought fit to select us as objects of the prosecution which has just ended in his defeat and our vindication.’<sup>2</sup>

When the newly-elected Parliament met in June 1831, the *Spectator* concocted some amusing ‘ Notes from Speeches ’ for various members. Some of these, purporting to be from the note-book of ‘ Sir

<sup>1</sup> 14 May, 1831.

<sup>2</sup> 22 June, 1833.

R—— V——n ’ (evidently a very typical Tory) are cast in a mould which is still extant.—‘ Revolution, robbery, spoliation, confiscation—rob poor man—chop off King’s head—glorious constitution—beautiful balance—Ministerial democrats, levelers, Jacobins, Atheists—French Revolution—altar and throne—pestilent political economists—dictatorial press—confusion—destruction—assassination — abomination — contamination — tribulation—’ While to Sir Robert Peel was assigned the following torrent of tergiversation—‘ Man is the creature of circumstance—the man who cannot change his opinions is a fool—the man who cannot change his conduct without changing his opinions, is a rogue—definition of *expediency*—ditto of *necessity*—deprecation of place—paint the joys of private life—the man who suspects me of paltry personal views no patriot—I support the Bill—etc.’

The Bill soon went into Committee, and a tedious wait followed, which tried the nerves and aroused the suspicions of the Reformers. Although the *Spectator* had asked in May—‘ Who doubts that a large majority of the Lords will pass the Reform Bill? (because), of those boroughmongers who happen to be Lords, a majority prefer their interests as Lords to their interest as boroughmongers ’, yet by June it was overtaken by doubts. It realized the danger now, and knew the way to combat it.—



‘ The constitutional opposition of the Upper House admits of a constitutional remedy. The people know this, and that, if required, the remedy will be applied.’—‘ The only question is,—how many peers is it necessary to create ? ’ But it seemed almost as if the Bill had been mislaid by the Committee ; and to the natural discomfort of the end of a London season was added the irritation of political dearth, for—‘ The weather is distressingly warm ; the debates are excessively dull.’ In this tension, the *Spectator* struck its first sinister notes. It began moderately, with an earnest, common-sense warning that—‘ If Reform be much longer impeded, a revolution of the most sweeping character will, we are very truly and seriously afraid, be inevitable.’ And three months later it added a definite threat, that—‘ In case the Reform Bill should be thrown out, the middle classes would associate for the purpose of withholding the direct taxes.’

Nor were these warnings ill-timed ; for in October the blow fell—‘ The Bill is rejected. Forty-one Lords stand in the gap, and refuse a passage to the National Will ’ ; and again the menace of revolution is touched on—

‘ The People no longer confide in the ~~skill~~, whatever they may think of the honesty of the Whigs.—They no longer confide in anybody but themselves. The question *must* be settled ; for if

it remain unsettled during another year, the stagnation of trade would determine it by a Revolution. By means of political Unions all over the country, the People will act as one man ; and when they are prepared so to act, no one will even think of resisting them. Above all, trust only to yourselves.<sup>1</sup>

The Lords had arrested the course of the Bill ; the Lords must therefore either give way, or be done away with. Only the stupidity of the actual Peers, and the sentimental attachment of the nation to their ancient and honourable House, could ruin the People's cause now. And the *Spectator* proceeded accordingly to cast ridicule, mixed with mud, upon the House of Lords.

' The House of Lords is hastening to a euthanasia because of its want of correspondence and sympathy with public opinion. A large and copious addition of popular peers would revivify the antique and mouldering mass.' ' The House of Lords not only is, but always has been, a very bad House indeed, and the reader of this Table will be struck at the extreme newness of our nobility. " Are these your gods, O Israel ! " If you will worship mere ancientness, pray let your idol be old.' As for ' The Personal Character of the Lords,—some of the worst men who ever lived have been Peers. Look at the numbers that are known as patrons and professors of the animal and degrading pursuits. . . . Our greatest gamblers are Peers '. Moreover—' the Opera is almost the sole brand of art that the Peerage has patronised as a body ; and then to what use have they turned it ? . . . has it not been made a *pépinière* for kept-mistresses ? To the same use also have they turned the stage—with this difference, that they not only have selected actresses for their illegal pleasures, but they have more especially selected wives from the stage :

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<sup>1</sup> 8 October, 1831.

some have done worse in this particular—several of the existing Peers have chosen their countesses in the street.’<sup>1</sup>

The general attitude of the *Spectator* towards the Peers recalls the lady who said—‘I kep’ m’ dignity. “Pig!” says I, and swep’ out.’ Sometimes it even became epigrammatic on this lively topic,—‘The history of the Peerage is a series of *Jobs*. It is a coinage. The actual Peerage is an efflorescence of taxation. A peerage is the grave of a patriot—the throne of the placeman.’ And even the Commons could not escape a measure of this scorn—

‘So many of the *bons mots* vented in the House of Commons, and which shake the benches there with inextinguishable laughter, appear stale, flat and unprofitable, by the time they have travelled as far as Wellington Street. Such (quoting a recent speech) are the “right merry jests” which the gentle dullness of the Commons House so kindly encourages.’<sup>2</sup>

And over against the parasitic Peerage, the *Spectator* placed for comparison the state of England in those miserable autumn months. The country had not yet recovered from the French wars, and from the overgrown industrial revolution; and to every other affliction had been added an outbreak of Asiatic cholera. So that when riots broke out in Bristol, it was with sincere solemnity that the

<sup>1</sup> 19 November, 1831.

<sup>2</sup> 10 December, 1831.

paper reproached Sir Charles Wetherell, Conservative representative of that city.

‘The reaction of which he babbled from hour to hour—let him now behold it in the characters of blood and fire so terribly legible in the wasted city of Bristol. The utmost period to which his advanced years can be extended is all too little for repentance and meditation on the grievous ills which his wilfulness and folly have occasioned.

‘The writers of the opposition press talk of constraining the people by an anti-reform Ministry. Constrain the whirlwind with my lady’s fan!’

While the sentiment at least rings true in this *danse macabre*—

‘Lo! now they swing round, in the merry, merry dance!

Saw e’er ye so strange and so frightful a gambol?

White Winter, red Vengeance, and blue Pestilence,

Of the “flag of the free” so dreary a symbol!

But they dance o’er the soil, reft of lordling and slave;

And they know its next crop’s for the free and the brave.

Hurra! Hurra! for a merry new year!’<sup>1</sup>

In March they are still asking ‘What might happen if the Bill were lost a second time?’—and the answer is not only macabre, but even melodramatic.

‘The evil passions of mankind might assume the shape of patriotism; the smuggler might rise into the political partisan. The desperate struggles, and the ferocious murders which are now confined to darkness and the sea-beach, might be perpetrated in every quarter, and in open day.

‘An internal convulsion would utterly ruin England, whose wealth consists in her commerce and her manufactures and her credit.’<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> 14 January, 1832.

<sup>2</sup> 31 March, 1832.

In May, the crisis was precipitated by the King's refusal to make Peers: but Lord Grey was as obstinate as his royal master, and tendered his resignation. The *Spectator* exulted even in defeat, saying—

‘Our enemies sit in the gate. The star of Apsley House is once more lord of the ascendant.’ But ‘Lord Grey has been cruelly maligned. Even *we* beg Lord Grey to pardon our comparatively small share of the suspicion which prevailed last week. . . . With such a leader, your cause is sure of success. No Ministry can be defunct which yet lives in the heart of the people. An unpopular Ministry would be without money: a Ministry without money is just merely nothing.’

But as it happened, Wellington failed even to form an unpopular Ministry, and by 19 May the King had given in, and had recalled Grey, with a promise to create Peers.

‘The People have not deserted the Bill; and, thanks to the People,

#### THE BILL IS NOW SAFE!

We stated last week that the People would in six months carry the Bill in spite of Duke and Devil. The Duke has been indefatigable: so has the other old gentleman; but the better angel of the good Earl has rebuked them both.’<sup>1</sup>

It was not in a spirit of idle boasting that the *Spectator* wrote:

‘We are proud of all we have been able to effect. What is the position we have taken on the subject? Have we not been

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<sup>1</sup> 19 May, 1832.



forward in every crisis of the question ? Where others have been doubting, have we not seen our way clearly ? Is there a step which we have not predicted ? Did we not hail the Bill as a good Bill, and raise the standard cry that rallied all England round it ?

‘ But the *Spectator* is of the Conservative order (even in its rabid Radical days !) and so is our constant reader. In all our advocacy of new measures, and our explosion of old Tory doctrine, one leading feature will be found to mark our proceedings—respect for the sanctity of property. The *Spectator* boasts that he here steps in as a mediator : on the one hand a conservator, and the other a meliorator, he secures while he improves.

‘ We have not only been wise among the sapient, but we have been, and continue to be, courteous and gentle. Though we have thrown ourselves into the foremost of the fight, our warfare has been chivalrous—we have taken no mean advantage : our object has been general good, and our arguments as general : we have combated with principles, not persons : we have attacked the reason, not the feelings, of individuals. . . .

‘ We challenge the whole world to say that we have, for the year now closing, done an ungenerous action, or said an unkind word, or in any other way broken the honourable rules of fair polemical tourney. We have shivered not a few lances, and unhorsed many a foe ; but after the fiercest contest, we could have shaken hands with our antagonist, and boldly asked him if all had not been fair. Is it not true, most constant reader ; and can many journalists make the same appeal ? ’<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> 31 December, 1831.

## CHAPTER IX

### FROM WELLINGTON TO PALMERSTON

Down with the Tories. The young Queen. The Prince Consort's position. Peel's conversion. Disraeli's presumption. The Great Exhibition. Railway managers at fault. Palmerston and the Crimea.

**I**NTENSE conviction gave a certain dignity to the violence of the attack on the anti-reform party ; but Rintoul was a wielder of the bludgeon by nature and tradition. The files of the *Spectator* in the years following the great victory resound with blows that spare no part of any person who was regarded as an enemy. The personalities, rehearsed in the politer atmosphere of a new century, seem gross and almost venomously persistent. The young queen and the memory of old kings are as little spared as chancellors and prime ministers.

A contemporary cartoon of 1834 represents the popular sport of Brougham-baiting ; and among the hounds who obey the huntsman, Lord Durham, the *Spectator* and *Examiner* take a prominent place. But the *Spectator* did not reach its full pitch of

invective till the Melbourne government fell and, since Peel was in Italy on 'a picture-hunting expedition', the Duke of Wellington undertook to carry on a provisional government. The prospect filled the *Spectator* with an impotent fury that exceeded all bounds. The preface gave warning of the wild onslaughts, advertised in what would now be called 'scare headlines', which were to mark the paper for several months.

'In the meanwhile, we are to be under the Dictatorship of a Field-Marshal whose political career proves him to be utterly destitute of political principle—whose military career affords ample evidence of his stern and remorseless temperament. H.M. is not aware that he has insulted the country', but nevertheless 'it becomes H.M.'s subjects to be exceedingly zealous and watchful, determined and calm. Slaves and idiots may talk of "confidence", but 'there cannot be an hour's confidence in these selfish soldiers and backstair earwiggers of the King.'

The *Spectator* despises the Whigs, it is true, but while they are in office, it at least felt safe; whereas now, under this irregular régime of wicked Tories, the paper fairly lost its head. It was in a panic and screamed hysterically against the tyrants. '*The Tory Ministry must be overthrown*,' was the form of Rintoul's 'Delenda est Carthago'. 'People! Trust not your Bull-dog to the Tories.'

In January there was a General Election, and the *Spectator* encouraged 'The Reformer's Rally to the Hustings', thus :—

'Prerogative has done its worst, or its best. The people's representatives are dissolved. The black flag of Toryism is again unfurled. On the other side, the victorious banner of reform floats proudly on the breeze : in front of the pirate and renegade band, appears the united phalanx of the True Men of England, disciplined and ready. *Down with the Tories !* is the watchword,

'That the King may reign in honour and peace, and that the People may prosper—

*Down with the Tories !*

'That the Holy Alliance machinations and Stuart maxims of misrule may never again pollute the soil or the air of England—

*Down with the Tories !'*<sup>1</sup>

That same week voters were exhorted to honesty in a poem called '*The Poor Voter's Song*', a doggerel rhyme rollicking with noble sentiments.

'They knew that I was poor,  
And they thought that I was base ;  
And would readily endure  
To be covered with disgrace ;  
They judged me of their tribe,  
Who on dirty mammon dote,  
So they offered me a bribe,  
For my vote, boys, vote !  
Oh, shame upon my *bettors*  
Who would my conscience buy !  
But shall I wear their fetters ?  
Not I, indeed, not I !

'My vote ?—it is not mine  
To do with as I will ;  
To cast, like pearls to swine,  
To these wallowers in ill :

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<sup>1</sup> 3 January, 1835.

It is my country's due ;  
And I'll give it, while I can,  
To the honest and the true,  
Like a man, boys, a man !  
Oh, shame, etc."

T. N.<sup>1</sup>

The election duly routed the powers of darkness, and in a letter from Paris, the correspondent, 'O.P.A.' danced upon their harmless bodies with the crudest brutality.

'Now the Tories are neither hated nor feared ; they are loathed ; they are spit upon ; and they do not merit the trouble of a kicking. We kick a cur ; but we do not kick a mole or a hedgehog, a marmot or a grub. Even that which is actively wicked, we respect and honour more than that which is morbidly and yet foetidly corrupt.

'The Fall of the Tories will not excite one sigh upon the Continent of Europe. Not even the bankers of Paris, who stand at the Bourse, rubbing their backs against the stone pillars of that beautiful building . . . will shed a tear. History will recall of them that they were without courage, without principle, and without honesty.'<sup>2</sup>

It has to be confessed that its manners and matter were not much better when in May, 1837, that 'amiable old man,' King William IV, lay dying. The *Spectator* remarked that 'it is a rational subject of congratulation that the future Queen of England has reached the verge of womanhood with the reputation of being amiable, discreet and well-intentioned', and the article continues to

<sup>1</sup> 3 January, 1835.

<sup>2</sup> 4 April, 1835.



discuss with amazing outspokenness the peccadilloes of recent English kings : ' most of them, in their youth, were distinguished only for their extravagant indulgence in sensuality ' ; while George IV especially was ' imperious, obstinate, weak, frivolous, idle, voluptuous, treacherous ', as ' the natural result of a vicious education and a pampered youth '.

Neither death nor kingship induced the *Spectator* to palter with the canons of truthfulness in the obituary of ' Reform Bill '. ' His late Majesty, though at times a jovial, and, for a King, an honest man, was a weak, ignorant, commonplace sort of person. . . . There might be a kind of fondness, but no real respect for such a person.'<sup>1</sup>

Towards the young Queen they showed a certain condescending indulgence ; and like the crowd who watched the opening of Parliament, they looked on their young sovereign with curiosity and a kindly feeling, but there was no display of enthusiasm ; though they granted that at her first Drawing Room ' her elegant dress, her pleasing countenance, her affable yet dignified demeanour, attracted universal admiration '<sup>2</sup> They appeared in a kill-joy capacity on the subject of the coronation, raising their voices against ' the senseless emblazoning of an idle, unfruitful action—a most silly, a

<sup>1</sup> 24 June, 1837.

<sup>2</sup> 22 July, 1837.

most puerile affair, signifying nothing, resulting in nothing'.<sup>1</sup>

On no account would the *Spectator* commit itself to raptures about a royal person just because she happened to be young and of the female sex, nor would they suffer designing persons to take advantage of these chance circumstances.

Now the *Spectator* had always hated Lord Melbourne. The easy-going *laissez-faire* attitude of the old worldling infuriated the busily conscientious proprietor; and by September, 1837, it had 'given mortal offence to the mere partisans of the Government' by its 'review of Lord Melbourne's course since Easter last year. . . . We venture to say that there is no previous example in the history of periodical literature of such a journal as the *Spectator* obtaining so much notice from its contemporaries'. And all because 'we are independent and plain spoken' and because 'we added to our old motto of Reform, that of Independence of Party'.

Meanwhile 'the circulation of the *Spectator* has been steadily growing', and the paper continued its steady criticism of Melbourne. And after Victoria's accession, they found a brand-new stick with which to beat him. Again and again its 'Court Circular' is full of biting references to

<sup>1</sup> 30 June, 1838.

his constant and monopolizing attendance on the Queen.

‘ In the evening, his lucky Lordship dined with the Queen as usual ; it is not known when he will tear himself away from his beloved Mistress.’ ‘ Viscount Melbourne dined at the Palace on Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday. On Thursday he was indisposed.’ ‘ The Queen gives daily audiences to Lord Melbourne, who no doubt makes the time not devoted to the mere signing of papers pass very agreeably.’

An article called ‘ The Palace Premier ’ deplored that ‘ Lord Melbourne is not the Minister of the Oligarchy, or of the People, but of the Court. . . . It is in the Court, on the skilful management of a girl of 18 by an experienced gallant of 60 that the government of this vast empire depends.’<sup>1</sup>

The overworded reiteration of this theme presently provoked a protest from ‘ A Constant Reader ’ against ‘ the matter as well as the manner of your remarks on “ a Favourite Subject ” ! ’ The constant reader admits the indelicacy of Melbourne’s proceedings, and ‘ the cruelty of parading such an intimacy—the careless, reckless selfishness which could alone permit power so to take advantage of inexperienced youth’. These points he leaves to the *Spectator’s* ‘ grave censure, when you shall be

<sup>1</sup> 28 April, 1838.

in a mood to notice them with becoming gravity'. But meanwhile he insists on the innocence and helplessness of the Queen herself,—'whom you would unjustly confound with a Mary Stuart'.

But the rebuke had no effect. At Christmas appeared a facetious article, recommending various Yuletide games for Ministers. 'Hunt the sleeper, with poor Glenelg for the hero, would be good. And "Hide and Seek" might be rendered interesting in the Palace, by the discovery of the noble Favourite cunningly concealed in the folds of the Royal petticoat', an early Victorian sally in more than doubtful taste.

So far, the *Spectator* had merely been showing its teeth, but when a little later Palace affairs culminated in the scandal of Lady Florence Hastings, and she died, the first sacrifice upon the altar of the new Respectability, the *Spectator* bit in good earnest. . . . 'A political writer is perhaps never called on to discharge a more disagreeable or a more thankless duty than when he is compelled to probe some scandalous matter wherewith the public interests may happen unfortunately to be connected.' And while asserting the Queen's own innocence 'of all participation in the *spirit* and motives actuating those about her', the *Spectator* urges the people 'respectfully to insist on rooting out the nest of vermin which are undermining her

throne'. For 'as to chivalry, we think, if a spark of it is left anywhere now, it is in the hearts of the People'.

But the Melbourne régime did not last long. After the false start in 1839, and the Bedchamber affair, the Tories under Peel returned to real and lasting power in 1841. And meanwhile, the influence of the old courtier had been shaken by the advent of Albert, about whom the *Spectator* became very waggish.

'The sort and degree of attachment subsisting between our gracious Queen and her bridegroom-elect, are to every young lady and gentleman in these islands naturally very interesting questions. That the Prince sighs for the Queen has already been insisted on. But it is naturally very interesting to know, whether he "sighs like a furnace" or only like "an ordinary pair of bellows."'

And what of the Queen's many humble lovers :

'Unhappy men, with this final extinguisher on their hopes, what will become of them ? Poor Ned Hayward who "strongly expressed to Col. Clithero his desire to marry the Queen," where now is he, and in what frame of mind ? And what has become of "The Commercial Traveller", sad but not inelegant apparition, that crosses the stage of History for a single brief moment, his hand on his heart, curvetting gracefully, and revealing in expressive pantomime the one intense secret of his existence.'<sup>1</sup>

The paper was more properly interested in the constitutional position of the Consort. 'Politically, he can *ostensibly* be nothing ; though *privately* he

<sup>1</sup> 30 November.



may be almost anything', for 'the representations and advice of Ministers will avail little against the wishes and arguments of a beloved spouse; and the deliberations of the nuptial couch'. The estimate of his position was justified, for, privately he became 'almost everything', while ostensibly he must remain 'a gilded puppet'—a relationship afterwards expressed in his memorial with unconscious and unhappy symbolism.

No one had been more directly or whole-heartedly abused by Rintoul than Sir Robert Peel. In the first (and also the best) of a promised series of 'Letters to Public Men', *Nestor* wrote in the issue of March 20, 1835 :

'I know you well. In the relations of private life you may be, and I hope you are, all your friends describe. It will require the rarest domestic felicity to console you for public contempt, and the greatest personal purity to balance the political prostitution to which you are abandoned. I pity you, Sir, from the bottom of my heart.

'My immediate business is to show that you are totally unfit for the task you have so boldly undertaken; that your pretensions to virtue are false, hollow and insincere; and that, in other respects, you are not worthy to hold the station you now occupy.

...  
'Your personal endowments I would certainly treat with respect did I entertain any such feeling for them, but, in my judgment, they have been singularly overrated. . . . You are altogether guiltless of comprehensive views.' Finally—'As if to make solemn profession a mockery, and to render the faith of public men a byword and a scorn, you immolated your public character on the Altar of Power.'

After such definite commitments, it is small wonder that some 'constant readers' were a little bewildered by the change of face in their paper in 1841. The *Spectator*, always preferring measures before men, had been sincerely converted to Peel by the sincerity of his own conversion to Free Trade. For, even now,—'He *is not* a Liberal, but a Conservative; men of his age, when prudent and honest do not change their principles with their seats. The consideration that remains must therefore be, what can a Conservative possessing the qualities ascribed to this man do?' and 'in showing what a Conservative might do, we only carried out the philosophy of extracting good out of everything'.<sup>1</sup> But to many subscribers this attitude was incomprehensible, and in September, 1842, 'A Puzzled Admirer' wrote to the *Spectator*, asking in exasperation 'To what political party do you belong?' The answer to this was

'At present, to none', for 'there is no one measure pursued by any party. . . . The present government is a necessity of the present time, the only possible Government at the present conjuncture, and Sir Robert Peel's peculiar mission is to *do*. He cannot rest upon any prepossessions in his favour: he must maintain his power by causing men to feel, against their will, that they are the better for him.'

The *Spectator* had felt this and knew that 'what Sir Robert Peel has done since he came into office

<sup>1</sup> 31 July, 1841.

is fully more than we were entitled to expect at his hands ; why should not truth be told '.<sup>1</sup>

In April, 1845, when the crisis was at hand, the *Spectator* made a studied estimate of 'the only instrument at our disposal '<sup>2</sup> and found his importance in the fact that he was a practical man rather than a theorist. 'Sir Robert Peel is not a man of principles. He is a man of honesty in motive and deed ; a man of conduct. His views and measures never have taken their "use" in principles : they have been suggested to him by circumstances.' His career 'has been less a series of tergiversations than a steady process of conversion '. In fact 'Peel is the embodied reflex of the public mind of England. He is feeble to originate great strokes of statesmanship ; he is strong to see what must be done, and to consummate '.<sup>3</sup> The mere talkers follow him even while they are talking—for 'the leaders of the League would talk about the principle of eternal justice ; the Whig leaders would cry out that Peel was plagiarizing from them ; but both would vote for him '.<sup>4</sup> In a word, 'Sir Robert Peel is really the only one that could carry the Repeal of the Corn Laws in a House with a pro-Corn Law majority.'<sup>5</sup>

Meanwhile, a grievous famine had fallen upon Ireland, and Peel had made his plunge.

<sup>1</sup> 17 September, 1842.      <sup>2</sup> 3 May, 1845.      <sup>3</sup> 14 April, 1845.

<sup>4</sup> 27 September, 1845.      <sup>5</sup> 13 December, 1845.

‘ This is a state of affairs in which a demagogue minister might ride roughshod over all opposition, backed by a people goaded to despair by fear of famine. But the nature of the man is abhorrent to such a course. He rests his case on argument, and indicates his contemplated revolution in the commercial policy of the country upon general and enduring principles. On this ground he is strong.’<sup>1</sup>

And on this ground he gloriously prevailed ; falling himself in the hour of his triumph, and dragging his party down with him.

‘ The Corn Bill is safe—but its author is sacrificed. The Corn Laws are abolished—but so is Peel.

‘ From being the leader of a clique, he has become the leader of a nation. . . . There must be something rotten in the thing called Party which can force from office the very man whom the country would choose, at the very height of his popularity and power.’<sup>2</sup>

He is ‘ the most conspicuous martyr of emancipation from party thralldom ’,<sup>3</sup> and as such he was permanently established in the good opinion of one paper, at least. Peel’s fall was due to the pitiless onslaught made upon him by Lord George Bentinck, and by that ‘ spoiled child of Parliamentary fashion ’,<sup>4</sup> Mr. D’Israeli, whose ‘ appearances in the Corn Law Debate are the ideal of pert presumption ’.<sup>5</sup> When, five years later, Peel was killed by a fall from his horse, the *Spectator* reminded its readers that

<sup>1</sup> 24 January, 1846.

<sup>2</sup> 13 July, 1846.

<sup>3</sup> 9 May, 1846.

<sup>4</sup> 2 May, 1846.

<sup>5</sup> 9 May, 1846.

‘ this journal was among the first to recognize, at a time when it was of great importance to ascertain the true character and disposition of the man ; and the sequel amply rewarded the opprobrium which we then incurred for being in advance of the party called “ Liberal,” and when the insight into his policy, which we derived from nothing more than a critical scrutiny of his public conduct, was ascribed to direct information.

‘ Among modern statesmen his career is singular for the completeness of the political change in himself. It may teach those who desire to emulate him, that it is never too late to learn ; that *courage* is *safe*, and that the courage which revises the convictions of youth and dictates an altered course will survive the hasty misconstruction of the day if it be steadfast in its purpose ; that a public policy suggested by close observation, based upon facts, and supported by the sanction of the nation, is irresistible.’<sup>1</sup>

After 1846 began a period of stagnant home politics, which lasted almost unbroken until the sixties. The fifties were on the whole a prosperous decade, and their rather complacent tone was set in 1851 by the first great Exposition. Like the Exhibition of 1924, that of 1851 caused a variety of controversies during the preceding year, and the *Spectator* was anxious, and a little irritable.

‘ Doubts are suggested to the public mind that while the scheme for the Exposition of 1851 expands in vastness, the conduct of its official managers fails to indicate fixity of purpose. The cornfield of Europe, the woolly races of Australia, the vicunha of the Andes, the goat of Cashmire—all these and many more spacious and multifarious forms of industry and commerce will call for room. Yet the central body is changed and uncertain. One danger against which a guard will be needed is,

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<sup>1</sup> 6 July, 1850.



that the subject may become a " bore " before it is realized. The Exposition of 1851 runs a chance of being a nuisance both to eye and ear.'

Protests against several preposterous suggestions for the site of the Palace incidentally give a quaint illustration of the changed nature of London. Victoria Park was ' only mentioned as the splenetic sally of individual contempt for the Project ', while Regent's Park was ' too far out '. As for Battersea, it was ' one of the great backyards of London. To the West lies Wandsworth, a village of singularly impeded ventilation, and to the North the River, with stagnant Chelsea and odious Ranelagh. The only attraction is the fashionable resort of Cremorne Gardens '.

And what was to be done with all our foreign visitors, talking uncouth tongues? for our grandfathers were not hardened to this difficulty by international conferences. But it was comforting to think that love at least does not speak in official languages, and needs no interpreter, so that ' gentlemen " in Love at first sight " will " pop the question " in Russ, and receive answers in—it matters not what language, for the eyes will serve as a glossary'. Many of course would not be in love and would therefore need other entertainment, but ' the best way to amuse our visitors will be to let them see us amusing ourselves in the way we like

best'. Alas ! there were ' no possibilities of amusement in Parliament ', but ' will none of the Metropolitan Representatives be so patriotic as to resign his seat, that the whole world may witness the humours of an English election ' ?

On the great opening day itself ' the Queen bore herself with courteous but dignified restraint, as if feeling more excitement than she would display. Prince Albert appeared less composed ; his emotion at the successful realization of his own idea was very visible '. The Duke of Wellington was there, of course, ' looking extremely well in the face and was conversing with his accustomed gallantry of manner to a numerous circle of beautiful ladies grouped round him '.

But what was to come of it all :—

' It is done, the work is accomplished, all has gone well. Not a cross, not a frown, on man's face or heaven's. Prince Albert, who did a right princely thing in so clearly appreciating and so heartily adopting the enterprise, must have sustained a good weight of care, not unshared by his crowned wife. We do not hold that the Gates of Janus are for ever shut because the Exposition is open—*although* Mr. Cobden was there introduced to the Duke of Wellington ; but that races the most diverse were there made to feel a fellowship in labour, a common allegiance, a cosmopolitan friendship, is an assertion not stronger than the truth ; and such a gathering must have noble fruits.'

During this year, railway accidents occurred with disturbing frequency, and the *Spectator* indignantly blamed the managers for these mishaps. For

‘railways may be haphazard things, but they do not go off themselves; and if railway managers will not establish disciplined regularity spontaneously, it must be forced upon them’.<sup>1</sup>

In an ironical mood the *Spectator* one day conjured up a pretty scene between the wife of such a manager, ringleted and crinolined, no doubt, and her little boy whom one imagines in a tarlatan frock and frilled drawers. This is the dialogue:—

‘*Intelligent little boy.* Mama, what is the cause of railway accidents? (Mama explains.)

‘*Little boy.* It is very strange, Mama, that railway managers do not know these laws as well as you do. They must be very ignorant people.

‘*Mother.* That does not follow. And, by the bye, my dear Charles, never impute ignorance to anybody without proof. You remember, the other day, while I was employed on my charity needle-work, you could not believe me when I remarked that Mrs. Evans was going to have a little baby; but the little stranger came. The railway directors know that the accidents will come, as well as I knew that Mrs. Evans would have a little baby.

‘*Little boy.* Then why do they not prevent it?

‘*Mother.* My dear, we cannot judge of other people’s motives. I did not prevent Mrs. Evans’ baby.

‘*Little boy.* Only accidents are so dreadful, you know, while babies——

‘*Mother.* Your father, who is a railway director, and understands these things much better than you and I do, was very much shocked at Mrs. Evans having a baby: he said it was an unwarrantable increase to the population. You see, *he* does not prevent railway accidents.

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<sup>1</sup> 17 May, 1851.

‘ *Little boy*. Ah ! I see ! Papa is a student of Malthus, and he thinks that railway accidents are useful, like war, and vice, and other “ checks ”.’<sup>1</sup>

Nor did railway managers alone suffer rebuke of the *Spectator* during these quiet years ; for succeeding Cabinets merited blame oftener than praise. When, for instance, the Russell Cabinet ‘ died of inanition ’ in 1852, the Derby-Disraeli administration which succeeded it was hailed as ‘ nature’s sarcastic comment on our national conduct for some years past—a practical reductio ad absurdum of all we have been doing as a nation ’.<sup>2</sup>

Nor did the Aberdeen coalition promise much better.—‘ The future is indeed a blank ; but it must be esteemed no slight gain to have made our way to this blank with no damage to anything more valuable than Lord Derby’s pride and Mr. Disraeli’s ambition.’<sup>3</sup>

Yet two months later, the *Spectator* is positively hopeful about this same Cabinet, auguring a ‘ new political era ’, and declaring that

‘ the talent of the Ministry, its capacity for public business, its oratorical and Parliamentary ability, the character of its individual members, cannot be doubted. Might we not hope that a Government really enjoying the confidence of the nation might come partially to realize that hitherto Utopian dream, the

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<sup>1</sup> 17 October, 1851.

<sup>2</sup> 28 February, 1852.

<sup>3</sup> 25 December, 1852.

government of the wisest, based upon the free choice of the governed'.<sup>1</sup>

For once, this confidence was not betrayed. Gladstone's first budget won the *Spectator's* praise for 'its fine spirit' and was called the work of 'an exact reasoner, an honest politician, a warm-hearted patriot'; and looking back on 1853, the *Spectator* granted that 'upon the whole, a good year's work has been accomplished; the state has been served with ability and zeal'.<sup>2</sup>

During the next few years the Government was fully occupied with the conduct of the Crimean War, and Lord Palmerston was made Prime Minister in 1855, the quicker to achieve its end. The *Spectator* disapproved of Palmerston as a specious time-server, a mere win-the-war opportunist—in much the same way as it abused Lloyd George sixty years later.

'He is gaiety incorporate, frankness itself, and diligence personified. If he does not evince enthusiastic devotion for any particular "cause", he always shows excellent zeal to serve the public, or his party, or his colleagues, or his friends. His exhaustless power of frankness is accompanied by an unwearied power of reserve; and the public, which cannot find his principles, sometimes thinks he has none, at other times that they lie too deep for common apprehension.

'Viscount Palmerston has never forgotten Henry John Temple. It is an artistic egotism. This love of success, of excitement, and of action, is probably the stimulus that our

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<sup>1</sup> 5 April, 1853 (? 5th).

<sup>2</sup> 31 December, 1853.



sluggard Administration most wants ; and the unreasoning public instinctively feels that to place Lord Palmerston with the new field of glorious action before him is like placing a high-mettled hunter before the open country.' <sup>1</sup>

'Where others failed, he could do ; the others being trammelled by their convictions.' <sup>2</sup>

But the *Spectator* was bored with home affairs, for 'the present state of English politics must necessarily appear flat and uninteresting to men trained amidst the conflicts of parties and the contrasts of principles which characterized the period from the close of the Great French War in 1815 to the final settlement of the Free Trade controversy in 1852.

'The party organization remains, though the objects of party conflict have disappeared. Names take the place of truths.' <sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> 10 February, 1855.

<sup>2</sup> 27 February, 1858.

<sup>3</sup> 19 April, 1856.

## CHAPTER X

### LIBERATORS OF EMPIRE

Wakefield's abduction case. His colonial philosophy. His alliance with Rintoul. Cures for over-population. South Australia founded. Lord Durham in Canada. His report. The New Zealand enterprise.

**I**N her life of Sir William Molesworth, Mrs. Fawcett groups together six persons : Wakefield, Mill, Rintoul, Torrens, Molesworth, and Buller, and says of them : ' As Raleigh deserves to be remembered as the founder of the Colonial Empire of Great Britain, so these men must be ever remembered as its Liberators and Regenerators.'

History has never given Rintoul and his paper enough credit as the creator of the winning idea that produced Greater Britain. The foundation of South Australia and New Zealand, the settlement of Canada, all in different degrees owe something to his constructive imagination as well as to his valorous support exercised over a period of ten years. More than this : he was the first and most vigorous preacher of a doctrine unpopular with all parties when it was first put forth.

The story becomes human and interesting from the day when Rintoul met Wakefield, the leader of the 'scientific colonizers', 'a little band, whose singleness of purpose and indefatigable perseverance were hardly ever surpassed in the founders of a faith'. They alone saw that the existing colonial method, or lack of method, was piling up trouble for the future, and was planting weeds where corn and flowers might be made to grow.

Wakefield had ruined his political career by abducting an heiress. The episode, which had no good legal or moral excuse, is perhaps characteristic of the man, and may be held to illustrate three prevailing forces in his nature: his enterprise, his powers of persuasion (which won the co-operation of his brother and of the young lady herself), and finally a streak of unscrupulousness. But on this occasion he failed; and as he faced three years of imprisonment for fraud, it seemed that nothing better than emigration awaited his release. He therefore spent his enforced leisure in 'reading up' the existing colonies, and in the course of his reading evolved a theory which the *Spectator* regarded as 'one of the highest triumphs of human ingenuity'. The scheme was certainly ingenious, and it cannot be better summarized than it was in the *Spectator*:

'Mr. Wakefield's plan embraces the following points—first, the disposal of all lands without exception by sale only, at a

*fixed, uniform, and sufficient* price ; secondly, the employment of the whole, or a large *fixed* proportion, of the proceeds of the sales of land as a fund for emigration ; thirdly, the sale of land in England, and the anticipation, when necessary, of the security of future sales, for the sole purpose of emigration ; fourthly, the guarantee of an Act of Parliament for the permanence of the system, and the creation of a special subordinate authority for its administration.’<sup>1</sup>

From this basis of the sale of all land by the Government, and the application of the proceeds to emigration, several desirable results would follow.

‘The Tax will prevent the Colonists from spreading too rapidly, will keep them civilized and create rent. For wealth never did and never can exist without concentration. The tax will cost the Colonists nothing, for it will be more than compensated by the rent which will be its consequence, and by the command of labour which it will procure for them. To furnish labourers will cost the country nothing ; while the labourers themselves will gain plenty of work at high wages.’

At last ‘the first principle of Colonization’ would be successfully applied, namely, ‘the payment of Colonization by itself’.

Other good results would ultimately follow,— ‘the increase of demand for British industry would be immense ; . . . the mother-country might save all the cost of governing her colonies’, nor would there be any danger of rivalry, since the colonies ‘would not be manufacturers’.<sup>2</sup>

Unlike his contemporaries, Wakefield looked at

<sup>1</sup> *Spectator*, 29 June, 1830.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*

the Colonies from their own point of view, and not from that of the mother-country. He regarded them as positive communities, not as negative conveniences ; and as he thought more of the men who were going out than of those who stayed at home, he became the apostle of Colonization as opposed to mere Emigration. To make new and better Englands, it was essential that better Englishmen should emigrate, and therefore the Colonies must be made attractive. In the first place, the dangers and beastliness of a criminal population must be done away with by stopping transportation. After that, respectable women must be provided in sufficient numbers, together with ministers of religion, and other amenities of civilized life. Finally, Wakefield insisted on the right of the Colonies as civilized communities to govern themselves, through elected bodies to which the King's representative should be held responsible. This principle is a commonplace to us ; yet in 1830 the notion appeared so fantastic that even the Radical Roebuck wrote : ' Molesworth has just started a crotchet, the strangest possible, that the Crown cannot form a Colonial Government without representative institutions.'<sup>1</sup>

The government of the Empire from Downing Street was the chief obstacle with which Wakefield's party had to contend. For ' the government of our

<sup>1</sup> Leader's *Life of Roebuck*.



colonies is vicious in principle, and abominable in practice, from beginning to end and from first to last'.<sup>1</sup> As government succeeded government, in the zigzag vagaries of party, the Secretary of State for the Colonies changed with bewildering frequency. Each man brought with him to office a complete ignorance of the Empire which he must administer.

Wakefield was not the man to leave his theory hanging in mid-air. He would force the Colonial Office to consider it, and to apply it practically by planting experimental colonies where land should be sold at a fixed rate. Therefore, in 1830, the Colonization Society was founded, to make the new principles known, and to bring pressure to bear upon the Government.

Buller and Molesworth were his chief allies in the House; and outside it, says his biographer, Garnett, was

'one who seldom wrote a line, but in whose journal the reformers entrenched themselves as in a fortress. This was Robert Stephen Rintoul, the clear-headed, practical, and at the same time tenacious and loyal Scotchman. Whether by the fascination of his personal magnetism, or by cogency of reasoning'—(surely by the latter, since Rintoul was 'by no means addicted to excess of sentiment')—'Wakefield established a complete ascendancy over Rintoul, and could look upon the *Spectator* as his organ in all matters relating to the Colonies'.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> *Spectator*, 23 February, 1839.

<sup>2</sup> R. Garnett, *Life of Wakefield*.

No doubt Rintoul recognized in Wakefield an expert and a genius, and put the *Spectator* at his disposal as a megaphone; but though 'Wakefield's anonymous contributions to his *Spectator* would make a very thick volume', we may be sure that Rintoul never published them without first giving them his attention, consideration, and approval. And in time, Wakefield came to set great store by Rintoul's opinion on colonial matters, even when they were not necessarily connected with the paper.

Wakefield's letters, written in connection with the foundation of Canterbury, N.Z., are full of such injunctions as—'Bring Rintoul if you can';—'We could get Rintoul to meet and have a good consultation';—'Rintoul's judgment, I am happy to find, entirely concurs after deliberation';—'I took this step after full consultation with Rintoul';—'In the afternoon of to-morrow Rintoul will give you his opinion, which is worth mine over and over again'. Often he says—'Come to Rintoul's'; and once,—'I purpose drinking tea at Rintoul's at his dinner-time. If you were to call, he would perhaps ask you to dine here.'<sup>1</sup>

He more than once begs his correspondents not to encroach on Rintoul's time; and Wakefield's niece, who was also his secretary,—'remembers Mr. Rintoul, the large-browed, gentle-mannered editor

<sup>1</sup> *Founders of Canterbury.*

of the *Spectator*, who must never be spoken to upon a Friday.’<sup>1</sup> But once, at least, the sanctity of Friday was violated, and Wakefield wrote—‘ I shall go to Rintoul this morning for the purpose of getting him to put a suitable paragraph into the second edition of the *Spectator* to-day ; I fear there will not be time for the first.’

Sometimes even the strenuous Wakefield needed encouragement, and he wrote to Rintoul on 8 January, 1850,—‘ Your letter is unpleasant ; the more because I quite agree with you. But what can I do, any more than you ? Your letter is like spurring the flanks of a broken-winded horse. Last *Spectator* was solid and interesting.’ Although seeing each other so constantly, and in the stress of business, the friends never quarrelled, and ‘ Rintoul never once failed (Wakefield) during an intimacy of twenty-two years ’.<sup>2</sup>

It has been said of Rintoul that ‘ the one great movement which he had deeply at heart was that of improving the condition of the working-classes in their domestic life even more than in their political status ’,<sup>3</sup> and this was probably his main reason for backing the cause of scientific colonization. The *Spectator* took up the question from the first ; in January, 1830, it greeted Wakefield’s ‘ Letter from

<sup>1</sup> R. Garnett.    <sup>2</sup> Garnett.    <sup>3</sup> Escott, *Masters of Journalism*.

Sydney 'as containing ' the best scheme of colonization that has ever been submitted to the public ' ; and in April of that year published a special supplement on *The Cure and Prevention of Pauperism by Means of Systematic Colonization*. It is of this supplement that Rintoul wrote to Blackwood that ' in amount and variety of intellectual labour, and that by the ordinary contributors of the paper ', it ' exceeded any similar effort by the newspaper press. I wish the Professor would look into the new colonizing scheme ; he will find it very different from the Wilmot Horton nostrums. The Professor could master it famously '.

In December, 1830, there appeared the first of a series of letters to Lord Howick, then Secretary of State for the Colonies, whose chief claim to fame was ' the worst temper of any statesman of his age, except Roebuck ' .<sup>1</sup>

They express admiration and even friendship ; but ultimately, Howick and Wakefield came to dislike each other with exceeding bitterness ; and the *Spectator* expressed one aspect of this dislike with its usual excess of candour.

' Lord Howick loudly praises Mr. Wakefield's system and then objects to everything that is peculiar to it. Notwithstanding his admitted good qualities, there seems to be a crook in his intellect, that will always render so opiniated a person more

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<sup>1</sup> Garnett.

mischievous than useful. If we might venture a suggestion as to the origin of all this crotchetyness, we should say that vanity is at the bottom of it.'<sup>1</sup>

Wakefield's voluminous letters to Rintoul are full of ingenious suggestions, especially in the various applications of Reform to the colonies ; but they are often bitter. For example, his eleventh letter discusses, in a tone of sinister banter, the problem of reducing the excess of population which he puts at the root of English and Irish troubles. He suggests some alternative plans.

'First, what think you of an Act of Parliament forbidding inoculation and vaccination? This would not do, because smallpox attacks the rich as well as the poor. Secondly, the deliberate introduction of *cholera morbus*, or the little plague? (which was to come in deadly seriousness before the year was out). 'This disease is said to attack the poor principally, but then we could not stop its ravages at pleasure. Thirdly, a good, bloody war? This very old-fashioned check to population, though sanctified by "the wisdom of our ancestors", and though it operates principally among the poor, is still open to two main objections. It destroys capital, and is unfavourable to "teaching" (a dig at the Malthusians).

'Fourthly, there is a method of proceeding which would *appear*, though it would not *be*, effectual, viz. putting down the newspapers. If there were no newspapers, we should hear little or nothing of the misery of the great body of the people. Such ignorance would be bliss to the philanthropist. Vice and misery would keep down population to the limit of subsistence.

"No! no!" I hear Lord Howick exclaim, "the newspapers have increased, are increasing, and ought to increase. Whatever the vice and misery of the great mass of our country-

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<sup>1</sup> *Spectator*, 29 June, 1839.



men, we shall know all about it. In this respect, we of the ruling class are wiser than any rulers of any country in any period of the world." . . .

'Lastly, *COLONIZATION*? . . . The only question appears to be, is there any *mode* of colonization which shall remove from vice and misery to virtue and happiness a sufficient number of people to cause fatness and comfort for fifteen years among those who should remain behind?'<sup>1</sup>

This mode was, of course, the Wakefield mode.

On 10 September, 1831, the *Spectator* summarized the *ends* of colonization as 'an improvement of the Poor Laws; a repeal of the Corn Laws; and a system of universal education';—and the three main *principles* as—'First, the universal and free sale of waste land at a fixed price, secondly, the employment of the whole sum obtained by sale in conveying labourers to the colonies; and, thirdly, a selection of young pauper couples only.' On which uncompromisingly scientific note the subject was closed for a time, while the paper devoted itself to the more immediate battle for Reform.

When the question is raised again, a definite enterprise was in being and was announced by the *Spectator*. After discussing Cobbett's assaults on existing Colonies—assaults made 'with his usual power of language and skill in illustration'—the *Spectator* of 19 July, 1834, adds 'it is a conviction of the truth of such statements which has led to an undertaking

<sup>1</sup> *Spectator*, 11 June, 1831.

having for its special object to found a Colony in which the evils of other Colonies could not occur'. This new colony was South Australia, and its foundation was Wakefield's main preoccupation at this time. But they needed sympathy in the Colonial Office, and the *Spectator* greeted the new Secretary with effusive flattery—

'Mr. Stanley, besides never having been a Tory, has visited Canada and the United States, and is just the sort of man *not* to let an underling decide for him. . . . Mr. Stanley's knowledge of Colonies, with his undoubted talents and industry, will enable him to appreciate the greatness of the present undertaking as an experiment in the art of colonization.'

At the same time, the Colony boasts that it will help to solve the problem—'What to do with our sons and daughters.' For the men 'to whom a new colony offers the happiest change of prospect' are 'men of small and moderate fortune, having large families to provide for,—a career for all the sons, be they ever so many; husbands for all the daughters, however large the brood'.

In spite of some political difficulties, the Colony of South Australia was actually founded in 1834, thanks to the erratic help of the Duke of Wellington; but the price asked for land was insufficient, and the guidance of the Colony was entrusted to an amateurish Committee from which Wakefield was excluded. So that after all Wakefield was disgusted at the very success of his plan.

He soon turned his attention to New Zealand, where the lavish promise of natural advantages was only marred by the ferocity of the natives. Rintoul wrote to Blackwood on 7 October, 1837, about

‘ a subject that will, presently, challenge a great deal of public interest—the colonization of New Zealand by the English. The project, which has been speculatively discussed for many years past, has now assumed a completely practical aspect, under the auspices of a very influential society, formed in London some months ago. Francis Baring, the Conservative member for Thetford, is at the head of it ; and men of all shades of politics are included, because, in fact, it has nothing to do with politics. A Bill for putting the scheme in motion is quite ready for Parliament ; and will be introduced *in the Lords*. There is no doubt whatever that it will pass the Lords : after which, let us see who will dare to oppose it in the Commons. Even the Government people, though they may not like it altogether, as not originating with themselves, and as not creating patronage for their hungry retainers, will hardly fly in the face of a work of such unquestioned philanthropy and usefulness, in the formation of which many of the first men in England take an interest ’.

But at this point two of the prime movers in the affair—Durham and Wakefield—were called elsewhere, and the New Zealand scheme had to wait for the pacification of Canada.

So far the object had been to arouse an intelligent interest in the Colonies among those at home, and a self-consciousness in the Colonies themselves.

‘ All these various groups—Australians, West Indians, Canadians, opponents of transportation as a penalty for crime—were agreed in recognizing the truth of the principles of Gibbon Wakefield. All were systematically thwarted by the Colonial

Office. Rintoul and his coadjutors incessantly reminded them that their cause was a common one ; encouraged them to perseverance ; laboured to diffuse through the general public a sense of the importance of the questions at issue ; assailed the Colonial Office with sarcasm and reasoning as the occasion offered.'

But now a new Colonial problem was emerging to test the judgment and courage of all concerned.

In 1837 Canada was finally driven to armed resistance against her farcical ' self-government ', of which the executive appointed in England was not responsible to the Representative Chamber. The *Spectator* showed itself to be whole-heartedly with the under-dog. Even for England's sake, a breach seemed to be the wisest course, for—' even victory over the Canadians cannot redound to either our advantage or honour ',—now that ' a civil war in order to maintain this millstone around our necks has commenced '. But apart from the claims of expediency, Canada seemed to the *Spectator* to be in the right according to the laws of revolutionary ethics. ' A defeated insurrection is a rebellion ; a successful one a glorious revolution ' ; and ' it is ungracious of Englishmen to reproach the Canadians with merely factious discontent, for the chief stimulus of the Canadian insurgents is precisely of the same kind as that which Englishmen would themselves feel most acutely.'<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> 6 January, 1838.

Irony is freely employed as a weapon against this blustering, bludgeoning war, in an article called 'The Departure of the Guards.'

'The Guardsmen can think of nothing but glory. Eager and earnest are their preparations for "service". The quantity of pink kid gloves sold is incredible. Bond Street never was in such a bustle. The jewellers are busy in getting up locketts, and scent bottles, and vinaigrettes—the first for mementoes to desolate fair ones, the others for use in the backwoods. Padding never was in such request ; for what is a soldier without breadth of bust ? The riding schools exhibit trembling tyros in horsemanship ; who foresee that for pacing ponies they must substitute hard-trotting chargers, that snort and rear fearfully.'

In January, 1838, the *Spectator* made the most famous 'intelligent anticipations' of its generation. 'Send a *man* to Canada, and only *one*, with *carte blanche*. He might, by giving the Colonies complete *local* self-government, preserve their allegiance for general purposes. But who is the man ?' This question the Government answered promptly, and to the *Spectator's* immense and very proper satisfaction, by suspending the Canadian Constitution and sending out Lord Durham as High Commissioner with extraordinary powers. 'The Government plan for the pacification of Canada includes the character of Lord Durham ; and its chief merit consists in the large authority bestowed upon one person, who must belie his life if he do not use such power for the ends of justice and freedom.'<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> 20 January, 1838.



The *Spectator* felt that Lord Durham was the right man, though it confessed his weaknesses.

‘Irritability of temperament, as well as morbid vanity, is attributed to him. How far the imputation is fair we have no means of knowing ; but the defect is so often allied to impatience of trickery, to firmness, to activity mental and physical, and other qualities of a similar stamp, that we should by no means infer the unfitness of Lord Durham from the circumstance of his being of a hasty temper.’

The discussion on colonial development which followed is wholly admirable. What could be better than this from an article in which England is depicted as a pelican *malgre lui*? ‘It is the systematic misrule of the British colonies which sends emigrants to the United States of America. We are supplying the American nation with the sinews of power, the means of rivalry, and perhaps of ultimate superiority, from our own vitals.’

The confidence of the *Spectator* in Lord Durham must have been greatly fortified by the fact that he took with him Charles Buller as secretary, and Wakefield as an unofficial expert on land questions. Except that the high-handed banishment of the ring-leaders in 1838, on pain of death if they returned, proved a trial for such a constitutional friend as the *Spectator*, its support was amazing and reached a high pitch of vituperative passion when the Whigs temporarily forced Lord Durham’s resignation and seemed for a moment to have prevented the most

famous gesture in our imperial history. Its championship had strong support. On 3 November, 1838, Roebuck wrote enthusiastically to the *Spectator* on the wrongs of the Canadians—

‘The people of Lower Canada have learnt by the lessons of a bitter experience, that irresponsible power, by whomsoever exercised, is certain to be abused ; and that it is vain to hope, that pride, or honour, or name, or station, will be a safeguard against oppression.’

Another letter followed, in which he declared that Wakefield had acted in an official capacity in Canada, and had even submitted a report to Lord Durham. Writing to deny this, a fortnight later, Wakefield took this chance to explain his own change of opinion about the Canadians, and to rebuke those who still adhered to their generously sentimental view of the case.

‘For a long while before the Rebellion,’ he says, ‘I had deeply sympathized with the majority of the people as represented by the House of Assembly. . . . But personal enquiry on the spot has induced me to abandon these opinions and sympathies. I believe now that I was blinded, as many others have been (yourself not excepted, allow me to say) by a course of misrepresentation—a regular system of delusion to which I was once an active party.’

‘The truth will probably be known before long.’

The disillusionment of the three men in Canada helped them to a more impartial insight ; and impartiality is certainly the essence of Lord Durham’s

report, which was published in *The Times* in February, 1839. Through Wakefield's prompt interference the *Spectator* at once realized the importance of this epoch-making report, and published it in a special supplement, with comments of which the enthusiasm is justified by time.

'*Lord Durham's Report on the Affairs of British North America* is the most interesting State paper that we ever saw. The Report is one continued censure of the system and practice of our Colonial Government. The inherent vice of the system, and the shameful practices to which it has given occasion, are equally placed before us, and in a light so clear that it may be termed glaring. . . . Lord Durham seems to know nothing of the *red-tape* style ; he actually calls all things of which he speaks by their right names.

'For the first time an eminent English statesman treats Colonists with the respect which is due to a free people ; concealing nothing from them, not intending to delude them with vague generalities, but admitting and enforcing their just causes of complaint, and insisting that *their* interest should be consulted by allowing them to manage their own local affairs in their own way.

'The remedial suggestions appear to us to be at once bold and moderate. The whole of Lord Durham's suggestions are founded on one principle—*that of government responsible to the governed*. We have but little hope of seeing them carried into effect.

'Lord Durham's report will be a most valuable text-book for Colonial Reformers in time to come and in various parts of the world. It has made the misgovernment of our colonies in North America impossible for any length of time.'<sup>1</sup>

There is real statesmanship in the comment ; but there was still something to be said in the per-

<sup>1</sup> 9 February, 1839.

sonal vein, about Whiggish infamy, for—‘ the Whig Ministers have set the example of more bad faith and foul play, more forfeiture of honour and base desertions, and betrayal both of principles and of friends, than any other Ministers, Whig or Tory, in the history of the world ’.

Again, the Whigs are ‘ men with whom the entire substance of life is undermined and eaten away by corruption and immorality,’ and now ‘ they make a “scapegoat” of Lord Glenelg. Having missed their treacherous aim at one friend, they stab another in the back to save their places ’.

Although the *Spectator* foretold a gloomy future, Lord Durham had after all succeeded in Canada. His recommendations for the Union of Upper and Lower Canada, and for the granting of responsible self-government, were both carried out in 1840 ; and beyond the immediate, practical solution of a particular problem, he had found the true formula for the evolution of Empire. As the *Spectator* foresaw, his Report was to be a text-book for colonial reformers in the future.

Meanwhile, there were other Colonies to be watched and fostered. The public had now and then to be nudged, and reminded that ‘ the present system ’ of transportation ‘ is perfectly abominable ’. South Australia had to be saved from tumbles, for ‘ this Colony is yet too young to go alone ; and it

also requires correction, like most children: we shall neither desert it prematurely, nor spare the rod in due season'; bad news is reaching England about its progress,—'nevertheless, we do not altogether despair of the Colony.'

In 1838 the New Zealand project had been hurried on for fear the French should anticipate us, and plant a penal settlement on the islands. But although the Bill provided for the protection of the natives, it was defeated and Government sanction refused through the scruples of Mr. James Stephens and his evangelical friends.

'The object of Mr. Baring's Bill is to found, in New Zealand, a colony free from slavery in any shape, in a soil and climate superior to that of New South Wales, under a system which shall secure to the landowner that without which his labour is valueless, a regular and sufficient supply of free labour,—to the labourer, good wages in the meantime, with the project of speedily acquiring land and hired labour for himself—to the capitalist and trader, ample returns for the employment of their funds.'<sup>1</sup>

Yet 'Ministers with their allies, Tory and Missionary, have succeeded, for the present, in defeating the project for colonizing New Zealand on a system calculated to benefit the Colonists, the mother-country, and the aborigines.'<sup>2</sup> Moreover, the fact that Gladstone, that 'really clever and promising young gentleman, could produce only the feeblest argument in opposition to the Bill, should convince

<sup>1</sup> 9 June, 1838.

<sup>2</sup> 23 June, 1838.



intelligent persons that there are no sound objections to it.'

But the scientific Colonizers could not bear to stand by and see New Zealand viciously transformed into another New South Wales—a worse one, moreover, because French. They therefore launched a private enterprise. 'The officers of the Church Missionary Society, being all-powerful at the Colonial Office,' had indeed 'succeeded in throwing out the Bill introduced by Mr. Francis Baring,' but 'the energy and perseverance of a few individuals' saved the situation, and added to the British Empire one of our most highly prized Dominions.—'By such means alone has England obtained most of her great public works. Private enterprise for public ends belongs to but one race, whether in England or America. The French cannot understand it, nor any people that is not of English origin.' This theory of the anti-Socialistic nature of the Anglo-Saxon genius occurs, similarly worded, in Wakefield's book on *The Art of Colonization*, and it is therefore not unlikely that he wrote this article himself.

In spite of Government disapproval, the principle of land-sale was applied to the new Colony, in the hopes that 'if it should be fully and firmly applied to a country possessing such rare natural advantages as New Zealand, there shall we witness the most

important event in the History of Colonization, which is in one sense the history of the world.'

In January, 1840, the *Spectator* drew attention to the tenth anniversary of the demand for systematic Colonization, saying :

' During the course of ten years the subject of Colonization has found a place in the columns of the *Spectator* whenever opportunity served, and not seldom when many of our readers, we fear, may have thought that the space might have been better filled. A different opinion now prevails ; scarcely any subject is considered more important. This alteration, like all great changes of opinion, has been brought about by a very small minority.'<sup>1</sup>

A year later, Wakefield wrote to the *Spectator* a letter ' which may be regarded as a condensed summing-up of volumes which have been written and spoken on the subject ' ; and in it he ardently acknowledges his great debt to Rintoul.

' As Editor of the *Spectator* you patiently examined my proposals, and manfully upheld them when they were treated with disdain and ridicule by nearly all others who thought it worth while to consider them. It was your support that encouraged me, not only to maintain a theory offensive from its novelty and generally disregarded or disapproved, but also to engage in a variety of labours of which the object was to submit that theory to the test of practice. Only eleven years have passed since I began this uphill work, with no helping public hand but yours, and I think we may say now, that public opinion has gone a long way towards embracing the main principles of my scheme. Nor are the results in practice by any means unsatisfactory. Whilst

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<sup>1</sup> 4 January, 1840.

I know that a large proportion of the labours has been performed without my participation—whilst I acknowledge great obligations to many, I am bound to declare, that for much of that assistance, for having been able to avail myself of it, for whatever share of credit may be due to me in the whole matter, I am chiefly indebted to you. I should have done nothing at all, if you had not constantly helped me during the years when the pursuit of systematic Colonization was a continual struggle with difficulties.'

They had certainly achieved a great deal. Canada had been appeased and given self-government. Transportation was being rapidly discontinued; South Australia had survived the trying years, and New Zealand had been started on satisfactory principles. Above all, public interest had been awakened, and colonies were at last regarded as valuable and vigorous parts of a British Empire.

## CHAPTER XI

### O'CONNELL AND CARLYLE

O'Connell and the Whigs. The *Spectator's* suggestion. O'Connell replies. His two letters. His death. Carlyle's two articles. His demands for Ireland.

TWO letters from O'Connell and two articles from Carlyle are worth unravelling from the tangle of Irish politics associated with the name of Daniel O'Connell. He won the battle of Catholic emancipation and opened a second campaign for the Repeal of the Union ; and in the course of it had a lively and even amusing duel with the *Spectator*.

Rintoul had suggested with satirical humour that as this ' factious demagogue ' was manœuvring for co-operation with the Whigs, he should be given a special office.

' Suppose Earl Grey were to *create* an office, and install the great Agitator as the PACIFICATOR OF IRELAND, with a salary of six or eight thousand a year.'

Two weeks later, the editor announced with a flutter a '*Correspondence extraordinary*' between Mr. O'Connell and the *Spectator*.

'It will be recollected, that the tendency of our remarks was to show that there was nothing in Mr. O'Connell's past conduct or present position to render such a junction (with the Ministry) impossible, or even unlikely. Of course our supposition implied no very high opinion of Mr. O'Connell's consistency, and we moreover roundly declared our belief that he was "in the market". To defend his political consistency and independence, is the ostensible object of the following amusing letter.'

The letter was certainly very amusing, and was written in a tone of good-natured remonstrance : but it is of portentous length. It begins with a friendly slap on the back for the *Spectator*, thus :

'SIR,—This mountain hut, which I dignify by the name of Darryname Abbey, is the residence of a Member of Parliament, most remote from London of any in the British European Dominions. But even here the *Spectator* penetrates ; and I can very safely say, affords much information and rational amusement. In truth, I like your paper better than I choose to tell you ; because I am looking for a mere act of justice at your hands, and I do not wish to owe any part of that justice to your gratified self-complacency.

'My claim upon you is this—you have devoted a column in each of your papers of the 19th and 26th of October to a dissertation upon me. I, of course, have no right to complain of being dragged, in your fashion, before the public. As a public man, I am public property ; and that the talented and well-intentioned should deem me of sufficient importance to form a prominent subject of discussion, is in its nature calculated to gratify my vanity.

'All I require is some attention to justice in my behalf. . . .

'You are not one of those, as I potently believe, who feel any pleasure in abusing me or any other public man : you seem to do it with an air of candour, and with that fair discount of mingled praise which induces me to think that you act therein purely in the discharge of your duty as a public journalist.



‘To enable you to discharge that duty more to your own satisfaction, and with more utility, I desire to correct some erroneous notions you entertain respecting me.’

As for being ‘in the market’—he denies the imputation utterly, boasting

‘that there is no motive sufficiently powerful to induce me to take office *under* Earl Grey. . . . Besides, there is this conclusive reason against my being in office,—that I am daily more and more convinced that the British Parliament never will—never can—do justice to the people of Ireland. They are ready enough insolently and causelessly to trample on our liberties. They have a direct interest to refuse us our financial rights. . . . The result must be either total separation, or a new adjustment of the connection by the Repeal of the Union. I infinitely prefer the latter; and I can never abandon its pursuit.’

Finally, he considers that the *Spectator’s* proposal to make him Pacificator of Ireland is ‘a persiflage which throws an air of ridicule on all that you say’. And he resents, with Johnsonian directness, the suggestion that he should be salaried in this capacity.

‘SIR,—I am ready and anxious to do the duty gratuitously. Allow me to THROW OFF THE SHOULDERS OF THE PEOPLE OF IRELAND A SINECURE AND MOST INIMICAL CHURCH ESTABLISHMENT—allow me to disarm a party Yeomanry and a partisan Police,—to annihilate all that is insolent, bigoted, cruel and ignorant in the Magistracy,—to fill up the Bench of Justice with men of known impartiality and competent knowledge,—to make the Law so cheap, expeditious and simple, that the poor man may find in it a protection and not a curse,—in fine, to destroy the hundred other giant grievances which operate to render the situation of the Irish people almost beyond endurance: let me be permitted to take

*this* course, and save you £6,000 per annum in the pacification of Ireland.

‘ . . . It follows, upon the whole, that there is nothing for me but to continue my practice of agitation ; voting for, and promoting to the extent of my feeble powers, every measure conducive to lessen the burdens or increase the franchises of the British people ; but always recollecting that my first and last thought, act and exertion, belong to Ireland.’<sup>1</sup>

Rintoul’s response to this generous outburst was drily sceptical and concluded with an analysis of Mr. O’Connell’s inconsistencies.

The inevitable reply from O’Connell was not forthcoming until mid-December, when it was announced that ‘after a month’s reflection and study, Mr. O’Connell has produced another letter for the readers of the *Spectator*. It is not quite so pleasant as the last ; but it is equally curious, and a great deal longer.’

Its substance belongs to an unimportant squabble of the past, but the quaint, petulant, half-pathetic ending illuminates one side of O’Connell’s character.

‘ You accuse me of anger and irritability. How little do you know of me ! How little do you know of the natural joyousness of my disposition ! of my hilarity of spirits ! I trust I have laughed louder and longer and more frequently than any other public man great or small in the British dominions.’<sup>2</sup>

So the matter ended for the time being, and no

<sup>1</sup> 9 November. Part of this letter is given in W. A. Fitzpatrick’s edition of O’Connell’s correspondence.

<sup>2</sup> 14 December.

more was said of Mr. O'Connell and of his inconsistencies. Indeed, when O'Connell was attacked by Disraeli and the Tories two years later, the *Spectator* spoke up on his behalf, pointing out that

'the Agitator was calm and jocular, cautious and courteous, while his vilifiers railed and spit their venom at him. Mr. Benjamin D'Israeli chose to commence a war of abuse with the greatest master of abuse; and then, finding himself worsted, pretends that he is an injured person. He reminds us of a puppy yelping under the pain of a kick from some strong-limbed horse, at whose heels he has been snapping and snarling for miles.'<sup>1</sup>

Next year O'Connell wrote for the last time to the *Spectator*, and it is pleasant to find that personalities were for the moment dropped, and that his concern was simply with the welfare of Ireland, which he knew the *Spectator* had at heart.

'SIR'—begins his letter—'The *Spectator* does "penetrate to Darryname," else I should be deprived of much entertainment and instruction also—and of the opportunity of setting myself right with you and your readers.

'The substantial point of difference between us is this—I assert that the majority of the English nation are *indifferent*, or worse, *hostile*, to the claims of the people of Ireland to "justice."

'This you deny. I wish you would convince me that you are right in so denying.' For—'it is to the last degree discreditable to the English nation to be indifferent to the rights of the Irish people. In the first place, it proves a want of gratitude; secondly, it proves a want of due attention to their own liberties, because the popular party in Ireland are active and ready partisans of British freedom; thirdly, it proves great ignorance of

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<sup>1</sup> 9 May, 1835.

the best interests of Great Britain, because if the Irish people were fairly and justly treated, they would be the best *consumers* with whom the British manufacturer could deal in peace, and in war they would be the best allies Britain could have.

‘ Upon these points we agree, and our policy aims at the same object. But you think you will drive the Whig Ministry into a course of more active exertion for measures of amelioration. I do much fear you will fail. Lord Melbourne and his Cabinet seem not to understand their own position. They have the Court party hostile to them. They have the Lords, led on by the most base of mankind,<sup>1</sup> sustained by the most selfish of the human race, and encouraged by the least chivalrous but the most daring of successful adventurers—they have such a House of Lords to contend with. It is true, they might have the People, the irresistible People with them,—but they neglect the People.

‘ What a glorious career lies before Lord Melbourne and his colleagues, if they do but possess energy and integrity adequate to the lofty destiny that awaits them !—The great national question *can*, nay, *MUST* now be decided,—are the Irish people to be fellow *subjects* ; or are they to be—I will write it—*ENEMIES* ?

‘ One way or another, the fight must be carried on. The Lords have already begun on their part. If the Ministry desert the People in this crisis, revolutionary dangers will necessarily occur. The People cannot much longer endure aristocratic despotism. Unless the aristocracy of the Peerage be curbed and reformed, they will involve the monarchy in one common ruin with themselves. . . .

‘ You see, we agree in essentials. The Ministry must *POPULARIZE* themselves in England,—or Great Britain is deeply injured—and Ireland totally ruined for a century.’<sup>2</sup>

In December, the *Spectator* published a sympathetic—even enthusiastic—*critique* of O’Connell, in the form of a mock obituary notice ; but its relations with the *Agitator* did not end on this note

<sup>1</sup> Would this be Wellington ?

<sup>2</sup> 3 September, 1836.

of harmony. When O'Connell prepared for the monster meeting at Clontarf in October, 1843, he was overwrought ; his catastrophe was approaching and his insecurity made him bluster. In a speech early that October, he declared that ' there cannot be a separation ' . . . unless a recently expressed wish of the *Spectator* should be fulfilled—' that I was dethroned, or that I was dead.' And bitterly he added—' I believe that they would take the latter alternative if they had the choice of both, for a more faithless creature never lived than Rintoul of the *Spectator*.'

Rintoul was of course as calm as ever in the face of this personal affront, merely commenting that ' our position was the very opposite ', but ' it is not our vocation to bandy vituperative words with Mr. O'Connell. We shall continue our endeavour to strip facts of the falsehood that disguises them, solicitous neither of his exaltation nor his detriment, but of truth alone.'

Nor did the paper waste sympathy on the Agitator when he was a fallen man. His conviction was justified, for ' the bearing of the Government shows blameless '. As for the man himself—' the self-delusion of years has been harshly confuted.'

After his death in 1847, they judged him by his achievements, and had to write him down a failure, for



'his grand deed was always in the future—always *to be* performed.

'He was large in person, in voice, in the scope of his cordial friendship; his physical strength was immense, so was his industry. He was truly Irish in the laxity of his choice of means to an end. He fortified a real case with humbug, and rounded off genuine eloquence with cajolery. In fine, he was in all things an Irishman—a very big Irishman.' But—'O'Connell never learned how to use England for the service of Ireland.'<sup>1</sup>

But although the *Spectator's* final judgement of O'Connell was a harsh one, its concern for Ireland herself was unimpaired, and in April, 1848, they called in the headlong, headstrong genius of Carlyle to discuss her fate. These two articles were written in one of Carlyle's slack times, when he had finished Cromwell's letters, and had not yet decided to write his *Frederick II*. He was seriously contemplating a book on Ireland, and these articles, which have never been republished, may therefore be taken to be in some sort an epitome of his conclusions. They may also be regarded as a flamboyant summary of the *Spectator's* own opinion at this date.

#### IRELAND AND THE BRITISH CHIEF GOVERNOR

By THOMAS CARLYLE (*Spectator*, 13 May, 1848).

The Easter recess having ended, and Parliament happily got together again, Lord John Russell comes forward with his remedial measures for Ireland. A most proper duty, surely. He has put down pike-rioting, open and advised incendiary eloquence, and signified to Ireland that her wrongs are not to

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<sup>1</sup> 29 May, 1847.

be redressed by street-barricades just at present ; an act for which all sane men, Irish and English, applaud him. But this act done, the question rises, more naked and irrepressible than ever : By what means, then, *are* Irish wrongs to be redressed ? Fifty thousand armed soldiers,—in red coats or in green, there are said to be about so many,—here is prohibition of Repeal treason, but here is no cure of the disease which produces Repeal treason, and other madnesses and treasons among us. Here is still no indication how the Irish population is to begin endeavouring to live on just terms with one another and with us,—or, alas, even how it is to continue living at all.

Of a truth, remedial measures are very needful : for Ireland's sake, and indeed, for Britain's, which is indissolubly chained to her, and is drifting along with her and by reason of her, close in the rear of her, towards unspeakable destinies otherwise. Our co-partnery being indissoluble, and the 'Warner operation' lately spoken of<sup>1</sup> impossible, it is to ourselves also of the last importance that the depths of Irish wretchedness be actually sounded ; that we get to the real bottom of that unspeakable cloaca, and endeavour, by Heaven's blessing, with all the strength that is in us, to commence operations upon it. Purified that hideous mass must be, or we ourselves cannot live ! More stringent than O'Connell eloquence, or O'Brian pike-manufacture, the law of nature itself makes us now, in every fibre, participant of Ireland's wretchedness. Steam-passage from Ireland is occasionally as low as fourpence a head. Not a wandering Irish lackall that comes over to us, to parade his rags and hunger, and sin and misery, but comes in all senses as an irrepressible missionary of the like to our people ; an inarticulate prophet of God's justice to Nations ; heralding to us also a doom like his own. Of our miseries and fearful entanglements here in Britain, he, the Irish lackall, is by far the heaviest ; and we cannot shake him off. No, we have deserved him ; by our incompetence and unverity—by our cowardly, false, and altogether criminal

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<sup>1</sup> Project to '*unanchor* the Island of Ireland,—with all its population and possessions, and anchor them—at a distance of 3,000 miles from us.'—*Examiner*, 29 April.

neglect of Ireland—by our government of make-believe and not of truth and reality, so long continued there, we have deserved him ; and suddenly, by the aid of steam and modern progress of the sciences, we have got him. The irrepressible missionary and God's messenger to us I say, is this one, he. A strange sight, and one that gives rise to thoughts—'the fathers have eaten sour grapes, and the children's teeth are set on edge.' He comes to us to revenge his country ; and he does revenge it. The mad cry of repeal of Repeal you can put down,—change into another as mad, or less, or still more mad ; but him you cannot put down.

For Britain's sake itself, if Britain is to continue habitable much longer, Ireland must actually attain remedial measures,—and of a kind we have not been much used to, for two centuries back, in this country. We have been a little idle, in respect of Irish remedial measures, for two centuries back ! In fact, ever since Oliver Cromwell's time, we have done little but grimace and make-believe, and *sham* a kind of governing there ; attaching ourselves to any entity or sham that would help us along from year to year ; imagining (miserable criminals that we have been !) that falsities and injustices, well varnished, would do instead of facts and continuous performance according to the eternal laws,—as if not a God had made Ireland and us, but a Devil, who could quote scripture on occasion ! And now it has all come down upon us ; and we welter among it, on the edge of huge perils : and we must alter it, or prepare to perish. Surely, if ever for any country in the world, remedial measures are needed for Ireland now !

The remedial measures propounded, or to be propounded, for Ireland, by the British chief governor, in this crisis, are—what does the reader think ?—*first*, a bill for improved Registration of Irish County Voters ; *secondly*, a bill for improved ditto in Irish municipalities ; and—and nothing else at all for the present : these for the present *are* the remedial measures contemplated by the British chief governor, on behalf of Ireland.

How it may pass in Parliament, this first attempt at discharge of governor's duty and debt towards subjects dying for want of governing, we do not know ; but certainly out of Parliament,

the attempt does seem almost surprising. Rather a lean instalment, you would say, of the big debt due ; probably among the leanest instalments towards so enormous a liquidation ever offered by any son of Adam ! Extension of the electoral suffrage, —good Heavens, what will that do for a country which labours under the frightfullest immediate want of potatoes ? Potatoes, possibility of work that will procure potatoes, or a substitute for that sad root, and enable the electors to sustain themselves alive : there lies the awful prime necessity for Ireland just now. Towards that goal first of all, and not as yet towards any other, does Ireland, from the depths of its being, struggle and endeavour. Extension of the suffrage ? Could the chief governor, in his beneficence, extend the suffrage through municipalities and counties, through villages and parishes, so that not only all the men of Ireland, but all the women and children, and even all the oxen and asses and dogs of Ireland, should be asked their vote, and taught to give it with the exactest authenticity, and the last finish of constitutional perfection,—of what avail would all that be ? Not that of course, I should say, leads towards work and potatoes ; but rather it leads directly away from it. Not by extending the electoral or other suffrage, but by immensely curtailing it (were the good *method* once found), could a constitutional benefit be done, there or here ! Not who votes, but who or what is voted for, what is decided on : that is the important question ! Constitutional men are by no means aware of it yet ; but the real truth, in a private way, is, that no fool's vote, no knave's, no liar's, no gluttonous greedy-minded cowardly person's (rich or poor), in a word, no *slave's* vote, is other than a nuisance, and even the chief of nuisances in its kind, be given where, when, or in what matter it like ! That is the everlasting fact of the matter ; true to-day as it was at the beginning of the world,—and only overlooked (for reasons) in certain confused heavy-laden periods, which by their nature are either fatal or else transitory. Constitutional men, I believe, will gradually become aware of this ; and once well discerning it, will find a whole unelaborated world of practical reform, on that unexpected side, of *curtailing* the suffrage again !

In brief, his Lordship's bill for improved Registration of Irish

County Voters, which is said to be good of its sort, and bill for improved ditto in Irish Municipalities, which has not yet come into the light, do, to impartial extra-parliamentary persons, seem as strange a pair of bills as ever were propounded on such an occasion. Our impious Irish *Tower of Babel*, built high for centuries now against God's commandment, having at last, with fateful shudder through every stone of it, cracked from top to base ; and bending now visibly to every eye, and hanging in momentary peril of tumbling wholly, and of carrying our own dwelling-place along with it,—will his Lordship, with these two exquisite Whitechapel needles, bring the imminent bulging masonries, the big beams and deranged boulders, into square again ? These, it appears, are his *first* crowbars ; with these he means to begin and try !

Is his Lordship not aware, then, that the Irish potato has, practically speaking, fallen extinct ; that the hideous form of Irish so-called “ social-existence ”, sustained thereby, has henceforth become impossible ? That some new existence, deserving a little more to be called “ social ”, will have to introduce itself there ; or worse, and ever worse, down to some nameless worst of all, will have to follow ? That accordingly a real *government*, come from whence it can, is indispensable for the human beings that inhabit Ireland ? That on the whole, real government, effective guidance and constraint of human folly by human wisdom is very desirable for all manner of human beings ! That, in fine, the King of the French drove lately through the Barrier of Passy in a one-horse chaise ? And furthermore that Europe at large has risen behind him, to testify that it also will, at least, have done with sham-government, and have either true government or else none at all ? These are grave facts ; and indicate to all creatures that a *new* and very ominous era, for Ireland and for us, has arrived.

Ireland, which was never yet organic with other than make-believe arrangement, now writhes in bitter agony, plainly dis-organic from shore to shore ; its perennial hunger grown too sharp even for Irish nerves. England has her Chartisms, her justly discontented workpeople countable by the million ; repressed for the moment, not at all either remedied or extin-



guished by the glorious 10th of April, for which a monument is to be built. No ; and Europe, we say, from Cadiz to Copenhagen, has crashed together suddenly into the bottomless deeps, the thin earthrind, wholly *artificial*, giving way beneath it ; and welters now one huge Democracy, one huge Anarchy or *Kinglessness* ; its ' kings ' all flying like a set of mere play-actor kings, and none now even pretending to rule, and heroically, at his life's peril, command and constrain. Does our chief governor calculate that England, with such a Chartism under deck, and such a fire-ship of an Ireland indissolubly chained to her, beaten on continually by an anarchic Europe and its all-permeating influences and impulses, can keep the waters on those terms ? By her old constitutional methods, of producing small registration bills, much Parliamentary eloquence, and getting the supplies voted,—in which latter point, it would seem now, owing to increase of Parliamentary eloquence, the chief governor finds difficulties ? Is it by such alchemy, that he will front the crisis ? —A chief governor of that humour, at the present juncture, is surely rather an alarming phenomenon !

C.

### IRISH REGIMENTS (OF THE NEW AERA)

BY THE SAME

Will his Lordship go along with us in the following practical reflection, and anticipation of what can be from what is ; which ought to prove consolatory to governors of men, in such universal downbreak as now threatens in Ireland and elsewhere ? Much is possible for the governor of men ; much has been possible, when he tried it with a true dead-lift effort, feeling that he *must* do it !—Here, visible far off on the edge of our horizon, seems to be some actual peak or headland of the country of the future ; which is already looming vaguely in the general eye ; and which, I think, the helmsman everywhere will have to take note of, and intently steer towards, before long ! A small fraction of that huge business called ' Organization of Labour ', which is of infinite concernment and of vital necessity to us all,—though numerous Louis-Blancs, Owen-Fourriers,

Luxembourg Commissions, and I know not what sad set of soothsayers, with their dreams of Fraternity, Equality, and universal Paradise-made-easy, throw it into discredit for the moment. Let us look steadily, and see whether the thing is not now partly visible even to the naked eye?

The unemployed vagrant miscellaneous Irish, once dressed in proper red coats, and put under proper drill-sergeants, with strict military law above them, can be trained into soldiers; and will march to any quarter of the globe and fight fiercely, and will keep step and pas-de-charge, and subdue the enemy for you, like real soldiers,—none better, I understand, or few, in this world. Here is a thing worth noting. The Irish had always, from the first creation of them, a talent for individual fighting: but it took several thousand years of effort, before, on heat and pressure of clearest Necessity, the indispensable organic concert got introduced into the business, and they could be taught to fight in this profitable military manner. Several thousand years of faction-fights, pike-skirmishes, combustions, private duels by shillelagh, by dirk and fist, and still feller methods; and indeed it was only comparatively in the late centuries, long posterior to King Rufus and William of Ipres, that the Irish fighting talent was got regimented, and these inestimable advantages (maintenance of public order and government authority, no less) could be educed from it. And what taming and manipulation it took; how many agonistic struggles on the part of sergeant, conqueror, legislator, pacificator, wolf-subduer, howsoever the organizing man was named,—long generations of multiform agonistic struggle, managed in a more or less heroic, and at last in a successful manner,—the gods and the forgotten Williams-of-Ipres alone know. But it was done, accomplished; and we see it now before us, and bless the unknown heroes and forgotten benefactors for it.

Is organization to fight, the only organization achievable by Irishmen under proper sergeants? There is the question! For example, the Irish have in all times shown, and do now show, an indisputable talent for spade-work, which, under slight modifications, means all kinds of husbandry work. Men skilled in the business testify that, with the spade, there is no defter or

tougher worker than the common Irishman at present. None who will live on humbler rations, and bring a greater quantity of efficient spade-work out of him, than the vagrant, unemployed, and in fact quite chaotic Irishman of this hour. Here is a fact, really rather notable, and such as invites meditation. For, like the old fighting talent, this new delving talent, being as yet quite chaotic, brings no advantage whatever to the poor Irishman possessor of it. Here he is, willing and able to dig, as ever his ancestor was to do faction-fighting or irregular multiform duel : but him, alas, no William of Ipres, or other sternly benign drill-sergeant, has yet ranked into regiment ; clothed in effectual woollen russet, or drab cotton moleskin ; and bidden wisely : ‘ Go thither, that way, not this, and dig swiftly (pay and rations await thee) for that object, not this ! This will profit thee and me ; that will not : dig there and thus ! ’ Alas, no ; he wanders inorganic and his fate at present, with nothing but ‘ supply and demand ’ buzzing round him, and in his ear the inexorable doom-summons, ‘ Thou shalt die starved for all thy digging talent,’ is the hardest of any creatures,—and I should say, the unjustest. Is there seen on this earth at present other such fatal sight ? A whole world, or nearly so, undug ; a man with the skilfullest, eagerest digging-talent, condemned to die because none will show him where to dig. There are many that have leisure, money, sense ; but it is impossible, they all cry ! Alas, the thrice-beneficial William of Ipres that will take up this wandering spademan and turn him to account, has not yet presented himself among us. Nay, I hear it said everywhere that *he* is flatly an inconceivability ; that the old fighting drill-sergeant, sternly benign, did indeed prove successful and unspeakably advantageous ; but that the new pacific one, prayed for by some, is mere madness,—nay that there is a kind of sin, allied to blasphemy and the other unforgivable treasons against the Universe, in so much as thinking of him, or at least publicly speaking of him.

Which opinion I must here take the liberty, in my own name and that of as many as will follow me, of mildly but peremptorily and for evermore denying. Not so, my friends ; I take the gods to witness that it is not so. In the name of human

nature, I protest that fighting is *not* the only talent which can be regulated, regimented, and by organization and human arrangement be made, instead of hideous, beautiful, beneficent, and of indispensable advantage to us. Not the only arrangeable, commandable, captainable talent, that of fighting ; I say that of digging is another, and a still better. Nay, there is no human talent whatever but is capable of the like beneficent process, and calculated to profit infinitely by it. As shall be seen yet, gradually, in happier days, if it pleases Heaven : for the future work of human wisdom and human heroism is discernible to be even this, Not of fighting with, and beating to death one's poor fellow creatures in other countries, but of regimenting into blessed activity more and more one's poor fellow creatures in one's own country, for their and all people's profit more and more. A wide field enough, untilled enough, God knows ; and in which, I should say, human heroism, and all the divine wisdom that is among us, could not too soon, with one accord, begin ! For the time presses ; the years, and the days, at this epoch, are precious ; teeming with either deliverance or destruction !

Yes, much is yet unready, put off till the morrow ; but this, of trying to find some spade-work for the disorganic Irish and British spademan, cannot be delayed much longer. Colonels of field-labour, as well as colonels of field-fighting, doubt it not, *can* be found, if you will search for them with diligence ; nay, I myself have seen some such : colonels, captains, lieutenants, down to the very sergeants and fifiers of field-labour, can be got, if you will honestly want them,—oh, in what abundance, and with what thrice-blessed results, could *they* be 'supplied' if you did indeed with due intensity continue to 'demand' them ! And, I think, one regiment, ten regiments, of diggers, on the Bog of Allen, would look as well almost as ten regiments of shooters on the field of Waterloo ; and probably ten times as well as ten war-ships riding in the Tagus, for bodyguard to Donna Maria da Gloria, at this epoch of the world ! Some incipency of a real effective regimenting of spademen is actually a possibility for human creatures at this time. Possible, I say, and even easier than William of Ipres found his work ; and it



is pressingly needful, withal, and indeed practically indispensable before long. Never can the mad cry of Repeal, or some cry, equally mad, cease in Ireland ; never can the world cease writhing and moaning, in dull agony, in dark, stifled rage, till the disorganic perishing spademan begin to get fairly in contact with his spadework : he cannot, and he even should not, know a moment's loyal peace till then. Some regimenting of spadework *can*, by honest life-and-death effort long continued on the part of governing men, be done ; and even must be done. All nations, and I think our own foremost, will either get a beginning made towards doing it, or die in nameless anarchies before long !

Do the governing persons of this country, does our present respectable Premier, consider that all this lies quite beyond his province ; belongs to the field of private benevolence, field of private enterprise ; and that he and the British Government have for their share, nothing to do with it ? Him also I must humbly but positively answer, No ! It is in his province withal ; and, if it be essential to the ends of British society, surely it is more in his province than in any other man's. Alas, I know, or can figure in some measure, the shoreless imbroglio of red-tape and parliamentary eloquence in which he lives and has his sorrowful being ;—tape-thrums heaped high above him as the Heaven, and deep below him as the Abyss ; and loud inane eloquence (public-speaking transacted in the hearing of twenty-seven millions, many of whom are fools !) beating on him likewise, as a mad ocean, and every single billow and every separate tape-thrum singing merely, ' Impossible, impossible to do any real business here ! Nothing but Parliamentary eloquence possible here ! ' All this I know, or can fancy in some measure, and sorrow over. Nevertheless, all this will not excuse an unfortunate British Premier. He stands at the summit of our society ; has, with his eyes open, and what real or imaginary views he knows best, taken his station there ; and to him inevitably do perishing British subjects cry,—if not for help, yet for some signal that somebody, somewhere, in some manner should at least begin to try to help them ! Decidedly they do ; and will, so long as there is anything called by the name of Govern-



ment among us. To say, 'Impossible ! Good citizens, be obliging enough to perish in peace : you see I have no help ! '—alas, can that answer ever, in the profoundest imbroglio of tape-thrums, and loudest parliamentary eloquence of the British Constitution, continue to be available ? The perishing British subjects do not think so, nor do I. Let the British chief-governor cry earnestly from the abysses and the red-tape imbroglios, whatever they may be : a Jonah was heard from the whale's belly ;—and he too, unless the Heavens help him to some scheme or counsel, he and we are lost !

C.

## CHAPTER XII

### THE FIGHT FOR THE NORTH

Backing the North. An unpopular advocacy. Lincoln's election. Bright and the cotton interest. The *Trent* affair. The *Merrimac* and *Monitor*. Gladstone on Jefferson Davis. The *Alabama* claim. Gettysburg. Lincoln's death.

THEIR first year presented the joint-editors with a crisis sufficient to test the strongest bonds. Now there is a legend current in the *Spectator* office, that when Hutton and Townsend differed on a question involving moral principles, they assumed that justice might be equally well on either side, and would solve the problem by taking the road that led more certainly to financial profit. But the conflict between the North and South gave no opportunity for compromise, and to their lasting honour they shouldered at once with unyielding zest a desperately unpopular cause. In the sequel their championship of the North became an historic event.

The cause of the northern United States against the slave-owning South was so unpopular, indeed, that with the single exception of the *Daily News*,

the *Spectator* was the only important English paper found to support it. Although the two men both ranged themselves enthusiastically on the same side, each emphasized the importance of a different aspect of the struggle. Their reviewer and friend, Mr. A. J. Church, remembered how

‘the two colleagues did not, indeed, regard the situation from precisely the same point of view. Mr. Townsend regarded it in its political aspect. He felt that if the greatest republic in the world should suffer disintegration, the great cause of human freedom would receive an almost paralysing blow. Hutton, on the other hand, was filled with a passionate hope for the extinction of slavery.’<sup>1</sup>

The attitude of England towards the war is a paradox to the student of Victorian opinion, for it contradicts all the tradition of solid worth and of unprejudiced moral judgement which is associated with that age. If we despise the Victorians for sentimental humanitarianism, and because they seemed to take the progress of civilization too much for granted, we are confused to find the bulk of educated opinion ranged in this crisis on the side of picturesque southerners who were upholding what the Churches and the public regarded as the un-Christian, and unsocial, and indeed immoral institution of slavery. Their excuse was that the issue was not simply that of slavery; indeed its abolition was deliberately

<sup>1</sup> A. J. Church, *Memoirs of Men and Books*.

rejected as an avowed object of the Federalists, for fear of losing the support of the border states. Yet fundamentally, slavery was the issue that should interest England most, as the *Spectator* was never tired of pointing out. But for Americans, the question of secession-right loomed larger ; and the world in general had to consider, besides the political and moral issues, such commercial issues as the supply of cotton and the freedom of the seas. Now, Victorian solidity was well and truly laid on material prosperity, and their duty to the Lancashire operatives and to themselves fought in their souls against their duty to the far-away negroes. Does not charity begin at home ? Throughout the struggle Hutton and Townsend were fighting not merely the outer world who read other papers, but were all the time bearing the displeasure of their own readers, to the grave imperilment of their newly-launched venture.

‘ The consequences to the paper,’ wrote Mr. Church, ‘ were for a time nothing less than disastrous. Subscribers fell off, and advertisers became aware that it was proscribed by the classes which they were most anxious to reach. Proscribed it was. I myself own to having said that “ the *Spectator* was right-minded but wrong-headed ” ; but it held on its way, not careless of pecuniary loss, for of that the two editors could not but be acutely conscious, but quite resolved that this must not interfere with the assertion of principle.’

It is gratifying to know that in this crisis, as in others in the paper’s history, the *Spectator* had after

all picked a winner and that virtue, in the sequel, brought more than its own reward.

In the beginning of 1861, the point in dispute between the northern and southern states was not so much the existence of slavery as its extension ; and since a compromise seemed to be possible, there was as yet no thought of secession. But already the *Spectator* saw that slavery was a thorn in the flesh of the Union, that would inevitably rankle and set up inflammation in the future :

‘ Can any temporary peace make the “ irrepressible conflict ” between the two great elements in the American nation—the Slave and the Free—repressible ? Is it possible to devise a lasting compromise capable of averting the evils with which slavery threatens the whole Union ? Rightly do the South Carolinians say, that the enemy they fear is “ the deep moral sentiment of the North ”, and that deep moral sentiment, hating slavery, and the political ambition which is wounded by Southern ascendancy, would make the conflict break out afresh, more irresistible than ever. At present, not slavery, but the limitation of slavery, is in question. The next time, assuming that a compromise is now adopted, who shall say that the question will not be slavery itself ? ’<sup>1</sup>

That is a notable analysis of the future ; and they saw further even than that—to the inevitable confusion of political with moral issues, for ‘ at present, a broad line separates the Republicans from the Abolitionists. But if a compromise be arrived at, how long will it require to convert the Republican into an Abolitionist party ? ’

<sup>1</sup> 5 January, 1861.



Events moved more rapidly even than the *Spectator* feared, and within a fortnight all thought of compromise had vanished before the imminence of war. The political struggle had shut out slavery from most men's sight,—who saw only how

'the hours of the Union appear to be numbered, and the splendid constellation of the West eclipsed. The political problem has rapidly changed. Yesterday it was, how to save the Union. To-day it is, how to avoid a civil war.' Meanwhile 'it is a strange fact that we should hear so little of the real cause of this fearful struggle. Hardly a whisper is heard of the slaves. The great public discord goes on brawling in the light of day, but, to the thoughtful ear, it cannot drown that potent but subdued bass which groans under the whole.'<sup>1</sup>

And in the same number, the grim possibility of a cotton famine was faced. Lancashire will be the sufferer, for

'over Lancashire, cotton reigns supreme. He is the lord of life and death, and a dearth of cotton in the realm of cotton would inflict unimaginable suffering. Cotton is an exotic, and on this exotic we have built up a small kingdom. The slave states of America practically monopolize the supply of cotton. And now we are brought face to face with a contingency long foreseen and often predicted—a conflict between the rival political systems of slavery and freedom in the very country upon whose continued tranquillity we have relied.'

But we must not sacrifice right to cotton, and can only find a remedy by opening 'routes into the cotton countries of Africa and Asia'.

On 26 January, 1861, the *Spectator* reviewed the

<sup>1</sup> 19 January, 1861.

situation, taking it for granted that 'from whatever point we view the drama, disunion appears to be the final scene.' For as yet there seemed no prospect that the North could impose its will on the South, although 'the Southern force must in the nature of things be a decreasing force', while 'the party which regards slavery as sinful must grow', and 'the party which regards slavery as an evil is large and is expanding'. On 2 March, the rival leaders were discussed and weighed in the scales of opposing chances. Undeniably 'Mr. Jefferson Davis is an able man', and under his leadership 'there is a vigour and coherence in the movement of the South, which mobs, however educated, never display'; whereas the Northern leader, the rail-splitter from Springfield, was as yet an unknown quantity. But Lincoln's election on an anti-slavery platform was in his favour and 'if he is prepared to uphold the Federal laws, whatever the result, the North has obtained a policy at last. What is required is not culture or intellect, but efficiency, a clear insight into the difficulty, a decisive plan to secure its remedy. The President-elect seems possessed of both.'

Three weeks later Lincoln had made his first public statement of policy in a manifesto which, though moderate, was decided. For if 'the absence of dramatic effect in the speech creates at first an impression of dishonesty', yet 'calm observers will

perceive in it traces of a determined and practicable though perhaps somewhat narrow and lawyer-like line of action. He refuses altogether to recognize secession, or any of the consequences of secession, as accomplished facts. Disunion, the actual loss of provinces without a struggle and without negotiation, is an official impossibility,' and therefore 'the Union still subsists.'

In the worst period of gloom the *Spectator* could still find reasons for a final victory for the North. It was on the persistence of the Northern character in a good cause that it set its stubborn hopes, because—

slower, and perhaps less chivalrous, the spirit of the Puritan is more earnest and persistent [than that of the Cavalier], and once aroused, rises to a pitch of enthusiasm which renders victory or destruction the only possible alternatives. The Puritan has always been victor in the end. Above all, their cause, apart from political issues, is palpably based upon the right. Politicians may chatter about state prerogatives and the declaration of independence, protective tariffs and the value of cotton, but the cause of the war is slavery,' and 'as the contest widens to the full breadth of that great issue, we cannot doubt on which side victory will remain.'

Nor, at this juncture, did the *Spectator* envisage a permanent split between the combatants, for 'the imagination is baffled in the effort to imagine terms of peace not involving the submission of the South. The two countries are so inextricably linked by

geographical position that permanent separation seems all but impossible.'

A new barrier to international understanding had now become manifest : ' the civil war in the States, besides the general injury to humanity, threatens to inflict a special mischief upon commerce by unsettling maritime law,' and by 1 June the *Spectator* was awaking to the shocking truth that the heart of England did not, after all, beat to the cause of freedom, but that sentiment and self-interest alike were leading many to espouse the Confederate cause. ' A party, numerous in Parliament and powerful in the Press, is beginning to intrigue for the recognition of the South. They are aided by the fears of the cotton dealers, and by the abiding dislike of the aristocracy for the men and manners of the North,' though ' they dare not as yet brave openly the prejudices of freemen, or advocate a cause based on antagonism to all that Englishmen hold dear.' Small wonder, then, that ' the feeling towards England in the Northern States seems to increase in bitterness', and that ' England is taunted with servility to cotton, with false pretences of liberality and with a wicked delight in the suffering of the States.'

Although the *Spectator* had always disapproved of the Manchester school, it welcomed John Bright as an ally in the Federalist cause ; for ' we want

leaders of the Bright school to give “*bone* to our aristocracy”, and his recent speech will ‘teach the South that cotton is not king, even in its own capital’.

By September, the *Spectator* was in a fever of anxiety lest the Government should betray England’s neutrality by recognizing the independence as well as the belligerent rights of the South. It urged the existence of ‘a large silent class, who care as much about the slavery cause as their fathers did thirty years ago, and who are not prepared to see England throw her influence hastily into the opposite scale without a protest and a struggle’, and it uttered a solemn warning in their name—‘We are now at the meeting of the ways. If we are wise, we shall stand sedulously aloof from all diplomatic action, till the contest is over. But all our moral influence ought to be clearly given to the North.’

And to enforce this argument, the *Spectator* continued to foretell success for the North, which was profiting by the lessons of defeat. But seldom was a patron so ill repaid. For just as it was commending their spirit and determination, the Federalist statesmen committed the clumsy folly of seizing the Confederate commissioners—Mason and Slidell—from the *Trent*; and all but plunged themselves into war with righteously indignant England. The *Spectator* stamped with rage at their stupidity, saying—



‘There are men whom no cause can dignify, and of such are American statesmen. With a mighty war on their hands, and a cause to defend so sacred that freemen would endure all but dishonour rather than impede its success, with the future of a Government hanging on their judgment—they have chosen to do an act which, while it makes victory doubtful, compels their friends to rejoice in the chances of a defeat.’

On 7 December ‘the chances of peace, though they still exist, cannot be said to improve’; only let us be forbearing and overlook bad manners, for ‘if we are to go to war with the North because her journals are vulgar, we shall never need lawyers to discuss the causes of quarrel and never be at a loss for a wholly unanswerable cause’. But ‘the very worst papers admit that the Cabinet may have to make an apology’, and we must remember that ‘the Government is not bound to support its agent in the specific act, however much it may deem itself right in exempting him from all penalties’.

It may be that the South is more attractive, that it ‘has statesmen, it has a strength and dignity of its own. But which of the two will England prefer if there be any choice left her by grace of the Northern statesmen?’ For though we behold in the North ‘a spectacle of far less intellectual pretensions—a constitution feebly controlling a reckless and licentious democracy, and feebly administered by a divided and mob-respecting Cabinet, yet we must believe that there is a growing section of the popu-

lation who really love to secure not only their own liberty, but the liberty of others. There is a growing section who hate slavery as the living death of states.'

After all, England (in great measure guided by Prince Albert) displayed an admirable moderation in the *Trent* affair ; and therefore the year 1862 opened hopefully enough. It even looked as if the crisis might have brought about a better understanding between the two countries, or the basis of a sounder reality. 'The prospects of peace have improved. If they surrender Slidell and Mason, the dispute, so far from embittering the relations between the two countries, will tend greatly to their improvement.'

Next week, peace had already come, and Mason and Slidell were on their way ; but at all costs England must not vitiate the dignified settlement of the dispute by making martyrs and heroes of its unworthy objects. 'Let us not falsify our true position by transferring to the men the feelings that were excited by the refuge they had sought. Now that we have redeemed the stolen property, not because it was valuable, but because it was stolen, let us show them what we think of its real worthlessness.'

But although the danger of English intervention had been averted, 'every mail received from America tends but to deepen the depression of the friends of the North' and even an article on the war by John Stuart Mill could put little heart into them. It was

good, indeed, that 'some one of his intellectual eminence should recall the wandering memory of England to the ethical character of this shameless and unparalleled war of independence. But Mr. Mill scarcely does justice to the disappointed longing with which short-sighted and impatient Englishmen have yearned to see some standard of noble and orderly strength rise out of the limbo and rally true men to its support.' And he should make allowance for 'the blinding dust of disheartening details, through which English politicians view the slow unrolling of the Divine plan.'<sup>1</sup>

There was an additional depressive influence close at hand, in the Lancashire cotton famine, which had become a horrible reality, but for which no mere breaking of the blockade could provide a permanent remedy.

'The cotton manufacture is not the trade of a year. It is our dependence on one supply which is the root of the present mischief. Our true policy is to endure, to assist the operatives by grants in aid, and then, confident at least that our hearts are clean, wait patiently for the few months which must bring with them an independent and indestructible supply of the staple we need.'<sup>2</sup>

Unfortunately it was impossible to discover from the American news what was really happening over there, 'for the mass of details bewilders the judgment, and reduces the imagination to momentary

<sup>1</sup> 11 January, 1862.

<sup>2</sup> 8 February, 1862.

inanity,' but on the whole 'the prospects of the North are brightening daily'; for 'the nation begins to know what it wants' and 'the victory of Fort Donelson is but one of a series of successes, and the series is but a symptom of the new spirit infused into the army and the administration.'

Public interest was revived in March by the dramatic duel between the *Merrimac* and the *Monitor*, for 'no scene so picturesque has occurred since naval warfare commenced', and the superiority of the ironclad taught significant lessons for the future.

'If the apparent is also the true result of the combat, naval warfare is revolutionized, our wooden fleets are not worth their keep, and we must discover means of dispatching iron ships even to distant stations'—while it would appear also that 'the introduction of iron tends directly to diminish the bloodshed consequent on every naval engagement'.

Meanwhile, the hopeful Northerners were already contemplating reconstruction and facing the problem of colour, as distinct from slavery, for 'statesmen and workmen, the thinkers and the uneducated, alike agree that they will not endure the negro as a freeman within their midst', and therefore the negroes are being driven out from the Northern and Western states. Yet 'the spawning force of the negro remains', and his extirpation 'is as unlikely as the extirpation of man', for 'he has already en-

dured all that man can inflict, and has multiplied and grown strong'. The *Spectator's* own suggestion for the solution of this problem is that sparsely-populated states should be made over to them, in which they might live, free but voteless, like Red Indians on reserved territories.

All these months, the Lancashire operatives had endured unflinchingly, and without wavering from their allegiance to freedom, the privations of the cotton famine. Grudgingly the *Spectator* granted that

'this is almost the first great occasion in the history of England on which we can truly say that a great working class is suffering severely, without ignorantly inventing imaginary causes for that suffering and demanding remedies which only increase the weight of general misery. We are therefore bound to treat them with the most respectful consideration.'

And they admonished the Lancashire men to lay aside their pride and let the rest of the nation bear its share of the national burden.

'The time is, we fear, inevitable when even Lancashire must be willing to accept from the rest of the nation a help which the rest of the nation will be eager to tender, not as an act of generosity, but of bare duty. This is a national calamity, and ought to be shared by the whole nation.'

And was not this Anglo-Saxon spirit of endurance mirrored in the perseverance of the Federalists, since 'Americans are only Englishmen in their shirt-sleeves'? And is it not creditable that 'they



have fought on steadily for fourteen months, and in the very thick of the contest have created a navy and organized an army such as raises the Union to the rank of a first-class power'?

This passage was hardly written when the siege of Richmond was raised; and the news was accepted as the most disheartening yet received by the friends of the North. The *Spectator* confessed as much, but was more than ever angry with those who gloried in the North's undoing, and who hoped for safety to England from the disunion and weakness of America. Such a one was Roebuck, to whose gloating the *Spectator* retorted hotly—

'the Union will *not* be weak for aggression because it is split in two. There are sources of national strength greater than width of territory, and homogeneity is one of them. But were the dogma as true as it is false, it would, nevertheless, be one of which England should be ashamed.'

Unfortunately, Roebuck was not the only distinguished man who needed chiding; and when in a famous speech at Newcastle Gladstone declared that Jefferson Davis had made a nation, the *Spectator* shook its head sadly, considering the recognition of the South as inevitable now. 'We cannot, bitterly as we lament the decision, honestly blame the Cabinet. They have only followed the lead of the people. The educated millions in England have become unmistakably Southern.'

All this autumn private discussions had been going on between Palmerston, Lord John Russell (his Foreign Minister) and Louis Napoleon, with the object of mediating between the North and South. By 15 November, the *Spectator* had got wind of this, and was of course opposed to it—‘the rumours about mediation, which we mentioned last week, are now known to have their origin in a serious proposition by the Emperor of the French, which has not as yet been accepted by any of the Powers and against which our own Government is very wisely disinclined. An armistice, we believe, would be a victory for the South,’ since ‘time is always on the side of the defenders. It is useless, therefore, to talk of the Armistice as equally fair to both sides. Only one side requires it, and it is on that side that its advantages would be felt.’

At the opening of the year 1863, the *Spectator* affirmed its conviction in passages that ring with honest purpose ; and this faith it continued to uphold throughout the year in spite of the disheartening nature of such meagre news as emerged.

In February relations between England and the Federalists were once again becoming strained ; for ‘no nation can live which approves such dispatches as Mr. Seward’s’ and the *Alabama* case ‘assumes a very ugly appearance’. On 2 May the situation was admirably summed up

(by Townsend, surely) in a few brisk sentences, thus :

‘ There is serious fault on both sides, and true candour on neither. America asks nominally for neutrality, when she means something very like an alliance, and England offers as neutrality what is something very like hostility. It is always easier in England to fight for a bad cause well managed, than for a good cause ill managed, or rather not managed at all, which is nearly the case of the Federal cause. We have no patience in England with mere political *yeast*.’ But ‘ for England at least, it is a question of no small moment whether she chooses the friendship of a great, active, ill-organized people, or of a well-organized oligarchy rotten at its roots and recommending itself to the nineteenth century only by boldly proposing to renew the greatest curse of the Heathen world under the auspices of an oppressive constitution and a hypocritical Christianity.’

The *Spectator* was doggedly optimistic throughout the spring and summer, declaring on 30 May that ‘ the failure at Chancellerville has settled nothing whatever ’, and that ‘ success or failure ultimately depends upon moral, not physical strength ’. With admirably balanced justice, they extended this moderation in both directions, and steeled themselves against undue elation at Northern successes. For ‘ Gettysburg threatens to be only an incident in the long-drawn drama ’, and ‘ those who expect the war’s termination from any military stroke forget alike the passions involved and the vastness of the area over which they are raging ’.

Indeed, the value of Gettysburg is chiefly moral, since it has ‘ restored courage and confidence to the

people, infused new life into the army, and given the Government fair reason to hope that they have at last found a leader who can cope even with Lee without disgrace.'

On 19 September there is an interesting article on Lincoln, 'the rather vulgar personality' whose 'mind has shown itself slow and hesitating, though never irresolute when once decided,' and whose 'dignity has not yet been equal on most occasions to ruling his own Cabinet.' This patronizing attitude, and the grudging allowance that 'Mr. Lincoln's modest and somewhat vulgar but respectable statesmanship is strictly a godsend', must amaze a generation of Englishmen that has read Lord Charnwood's biography, and seen Mr. Drinkwater's rhapsodic play. But they must remember that Lincoln was the laughing-stock of contemporary Englishmen, who jeered at his rugged features and loose limbs, his provincial origin, and even his cause; and they paid him tardy tribute only after his dramatic end had roused them to a starker study of his character and achievement.

Clearly Vicksburg and Gettysburg were not the end. 'The war is now to drag on for life' and English interest in it is on the rapid wane. For it is no longer 'news'—that function being henceforth usurped by the Schleswig-Holstein question.

During the year 1864, there were comparatively

few articles in the *Spectator* on American questions, but there were some long and vivid descriptions of Sherman's famous march through Georgia ; while in the autumn, the re-election of Lincoln is discussed, still without any recognition of his greatness.

‘ Except his cool external way of watching the development of events, and his thoroughly honest experimentation as an administrator, probably Mr. Lincoln's thorough *conservatism* of feeling is his greatest recommendation in the eyes of the country party of the North. He is in some respects to the people what George III was during the first American rebellion to the people of England—a man really identified with them in their prejudices as well as in their small virtues.’<sup>1</sup>

It was not till the hour of his death that the essential genius of Lincoln was recognized ; but then all amends were made.

‘ At half-past seven a.m. on the 15th of April Abraham Lincoln ended the short but glorious career which will place him for ever among the noblest rulers of the world. . . . The noblest President whom America has had since the time of Washington, certainly the best, if not the ablest, man ruling over any country in the civilized world, has been assassinated.’

So the war had ended, as it had started, in a violent death ; but the characters of the two victims were very different and provided an instructive contrast.

‘ He [Lincoln] was as much the opposite of John Brown as one noble and good man could be of another noble and good man. Hence while the martyrdom of John Brown seems the natural

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<sup>1</sup> 16 November, 1864.



close to a noble but half-presumptuous career, the murder of Mr. Lincoln looks like an anomaly in history.

‘With such an example of pure and self-forgetful patriotism running in their memories, it will be barely possible for the North to give themselves up to vindictive feeling. And we may well hope that the strong and gentle nature whose last official words were words of sympathy for his foes, will inspire the future policy of the North as completely as if Mr. Lincoln could still rule them.’

The war is over at last, the Union beyond all expectation restored ; but ‘the negro is still master of the American situation. Upon every other point the prospects of the Union are sufficiently bright, but emancipation promises, as de Tocqueville predicted, to be but the beginning of the difficulty.’<sup>1</sup> What, after all, is to be done about the emancipated negro ? ‘All he can ask is a clear field and no favour, and that once obtained, he must reach his goal for himself. There may be better ways of obtaining it for him than the concession of the suffrage, and we confess that the experiment strikes us as one attended with some risk, but as yet we can see no other plan which would as certainly secure the intended result—the absolute legal freedom of every person within the Union.’ Finally, ‘we entreat the American people to do all in their power to terminate this at once glorious and miserable conflict, with a policy so generous that it may be the admiration even of their foes.’

<sup>1</sup> 16 June, 1865.

## CHAPTER XIII

### LETTERS AND ART

Florence Nightingale. Talleyrand. Queen Victoria as artist. Verdict on the Brownings; Tennyson; Dickens; Matthew Arnold; Charlotte Brontë. William Rossetti's appearance. And Haydon's. Leigh Hunt's 'Occasional'.

THE judgement of the *Spectator* on Art and Letters under its first and later proprietors differs immensely. On the whole width of sympathy grew with years. Nascent genius or talent was not always appreciated even under St. Loe Strachey, who delighted in making discoveries; but the *Spectator* could be very quick on occasion to catch a new note. More than this, it was often particularly ready to praise, and even to print, work that ran counter to what might seem its literary and philosophic canons. Perhaps the most salient example is the acceptance of Samuel Butler's satire *A Psalm of Montreal*. Butler's talent—or should we say genius?—extracted more irritation than admiration from the bulk of his contemporaries; and this particular satire, most



Reproduction of wood engravings by George Cruikshank, which appeared in the *Spectator* of August 16th, 1828, illustrating an article on the murder of Maria Marten



mordant of all, was cast in a mode foreign both to prevailing fashion and to the *Spectator's* literary canons. *A Psalm of Montreal* was printed in the *Spectator* in 1878, but two years earlier the paper had reviewed with wholehearted zest the anonymous *Erewhon*. The review probably did the book more good than any other notice. Butler records in his 'Notebook':

'I remember when I was at Down we were talking of what it is that sells a book. Mr. Darwin said he did not believe it was reviews and advertisements, but simply "being talked about" that sold a book.

'I believe he is quite right here, but surely a good flaming review helps to get a book talked about. . . . The review of *Erewhon* in the *Spectator* did sell a few copies of *Erewhon*, but then it was such a very strong one and the anonymousness of the book stimulated curiosity.'

It certainly needed editorial courage as well as insight to print some verses in the now famous *Psalm*. It is an unrhymed satire evoked by the discovery of the Discobolus along with animals' skins in the lumber room of the Museum at Montreal. The room was occupied by an old man engaged in stuffing an owl. He speaks:

The Discobolus is put here because he is vulgar,  
 He has neither vest nor pants with which to cover his limbs  
 I, Sir, am a person of respectable connections,  
 My brother-in-law is haberdasher to Mr. Spurgeon.  
     O God! O Montreal!



‘ Then I said, “ O brother-in-law to Mr. Spurgeon’s haberdasher,

Who seasonest also the skins of Canadian owls,  
Thou callest trousers ‘ pants ’ whereas I call them ‘ trousers ’,  
Therefore thou art in hell-fire and may the Lord pity thee ! ”  
O God ! O Montreal ! ’

The *Spectator* was a little slower, though quicker than most contemporaries, in discovering Kipling, for there is no record of the earliest Indian books ; but *Soldiers Three* (Allahabad, 1889) had an enthusiastic review on March 23, when Kipling’s name was almost unknown in England :

‘ As a wholesome corrective to what may be called the oleographic style of depicting military life, now so much in vogue, Mr. Kipling’s brilliant sketches of the barrack room, realistic in the best sense of the word, deserve a hearty welcome. . . . The perusal of these stories cannot fail to inspire the reader with the desire to make further acquaintance with the other writings of the author. They are brimful of humanity and a drollery that never degenerates into burlesque. . . . Mr. K. is so gifted and versatile that one would gladly see him at work on a larger canvas. But to be so brilliant a teller of short stories is in itself no small distinction.’

Henley was accepted with equal zest in his early days. His *Song of the Sword and other Verses* was drastically handled in a full page :

“ “ There is a flapping of wings, but it is not of an ordinary bird ; it is a colossal nightingale, a skylark of the grandeur of an eagle, as it existed, it is said, in the primitive world.” Thus wrote Heine of Berlioz ; but the words are not amiss when applied to the author of *The Song of the Sword*. . . . The term of “ minor poet ” is surely inapplicable to one who winds such portentous

*sennets* on the English horn, who is so bizarre and original in his choice of metaphors, so royal in his disregard for the portentous. . . . The best and the worst work in this strange book is to be found . . . in "London Voluntaries".

Another, and greater writer, whose manner and quality were new to his generation, was promptly accepted—Doughty, the author of *Arabia Deserta*. This 'great book' had a glowing review—two full pages—on 7 April, 1888 :

'It is the highest tribute that we can pay Mr. Doughty to own, that with the charm of Burckhardt and Burton, Palgrave and Palmer undiminished upon us, we judge his book to be the most remarkable record of adventure and research which has been published in this generation. . . . The style is too spontaneous and well sustained to have been borrowed from books. It is born of the writer's own personality and ripened, as some of our best English has been, by the leisure and sunshine of the East.'

The first reviews of Pater and Stevenson are both interesting. Pater's *Renaissance* had a full review on 14 June, 1873 :

'We shall not say that Mr. Pater's criticism totally eclipses the interest of such painting as Botticelli's, or of such poetry as Joachim du Bellay's, but we suspect that in strength and vividness of description it approaches the one, and in force of thought and depth of sentiment surpasses the other. His best passages, which are perhaps too visibly laboured, have subtle touches of lovely colour, and a sweet quiet cadence, hardly amounting to rhythm, which are distinguishable from those of poetry only in form.'

The reviewer quoted at length the famous passage on 'La Gioconda'.

R. L. Stevenson's *An Inland Voyage* had a full page on 20 July, 1878 :

'Mr. Stevenson's style is founded on some of our earlier writers, but it has a distinct flavour of its own. Tastes differ, and the *Inland Voyage* is not a book to charm everyone, but readers who like it at all will like it very much indeed.'

The *Spectator* was among the first to recognize George Moore's quality. *A Modern Lover* had a full review on 18 August, 1883. It

'is not a bit of a built-up story ; it has a very uncommon note of spontaneity : it tells itself, and its faults are the defects of its qualities of moderation and sincerity. . . . It gives a clever evolution of character without exaggeration, and a view of modern life which, while it is tinged with pessimism, is not scornful or bitter but on the whole tolerant and good-humoured. [The reviewer contrasts it favourably with Zola's *naturalism*.] The work is one which will make its mark—the best sort of mark for an author, for it means that its readers will look with expectation for its successor.'

In face of such and many other instances, it is a little difficult to discover why the *Spectator* won a certain reputation for conventionality in the domain of letters, but it did not prevent the young poets sending their verses to Wellington Street. To give one example of many : James Elroy Flecker's *Taeping* first appeared in the *Spectator*. 'Eh ! What ? The citadel of respectability stormed ! ' as Douglas Golding wrote in recording the fact.

The severest critics recognized the value of the

*Spectator* reviews ; and this general attitude is well expressed in a letter from Leslie Stephen to Thomas Hardy in January, 1874. Hardy had been much pleased by the *Spectator* review of *Far from the Madding Crowd*, and although the critic had attributed the book to George Eliot, Stephen wrote : ' Besides the gentle *Spectator*, who thinks you must be George Eliot because you know the names of the stars, several good judges have . . . Moreover the *Spectator* has really a good deal of critical feeling. I always like to be praised by it.'

So did they all, not least Stevenson, even when he was vexed because ' my grandmother, as I used to call that able paper ; and an able paper it is and a fair one ' found his work lacking in psychology.

A personal reason may suffice for the pleasure of quoting one famous poem that made its appearance in the *Spectator*. A clergyman in the depths of the country, who read the *Spectator* through every week for a generation or two, got by heart an unsigned poem. Several times at wide intervals he asked me to find out who wrote it. The subject had not been mentioned between us for a dozen years or more when I came upon the verses in reading Rossetti. They have been published in more than one anthology and are well known both for themselves and because they were written after the death of his wife and preceded a long period

of silence. I at once wrote announcing the discovery, and the next morning received a letter asking me again for the author's name. Our letters had crossed. It was difficult not to wonder whether the depth of feeling in the poem had not helped to put telepathic sympathy in action.

THE WOODSPURGE

The wind flapped loose, the wind was still,  
Shaken out dead from tree and hill :  
I had walked on at the wind's will,  
I sat now, for the wind was still.

Between my knees my forehead was,  
My lips, drawn in, said not Alas !  
My hair was over in the grass,  
My naked ears heard the day pass.

My eyes, wide open, had the run  
Of some ten weeds to fix upon ;  
Among those few out of the sun,  
The woodspurge flowers, three cups in one.

From perfect grief there need not be  
Wisdom or even memory :  
One thing then learnt remains to me,—  
The woodspurge has a cup of three.

The *Spectator* made at least its share of discoveries ; but the wisest contemporaries are not always prophets ; and in general those who enjoy savouring examples of the fallibility of human judgements will find no richer field than the pages of contemporary critics on art and letters, and wandering there is at least amusing. Few passages



in Pepys have quite the circulation of his crisp condemnation of Shakespeare. 'To the King's Theatre, where we saw *Midsummer Night's Dream*, which I had never seen before, nor shall ever again, for it is the most insipid ridiculous play that ever I saw in my life.'

Incidentally a production of *Midsummer Night's Dream* in 1840 is almost the only theatrical spectacle praised in the files of that period ; and the general point of view is interesting. 'Realities,' writes the critic in 1842, 'have no business on the stage, unless they assume a mimic shape. It is not what a thing is, but what it appears to be, that has to be considered.'

The *Spectator* was never called upon, perhaps fortunately, to give a verdict on a contemporary Shakespeare ; but its reviewers, in its salad days, more or less condemned at various times Tennyson, Browning, Matthew Arnold, Meredith, and in the most wrong-headed way, Dickens. They were rather slow to find any virtue in the Pre-Raphaelite artists and Millais. In music, Rossini and Puccini are 'pop-guns' making ludicrous practice against Haydn, Mozart, Beethoven, Spohr, Weber and Hummel. Rintoul was very quick to recognize merit in the political or any field of action, even if the actor was a woman. He strongly approved, for example, the much-criticized appointment of

Florence Nightingale in the Crimean War, and was indignant with those who for merely sectarian reasons carped at it, for 'she is in the prime of life; accomplished, beloved, and, a co-heiress, she has the command of every comfort; yet she has set comforts aside and devoted herself to attend the infirm, the destitute and the erring. She has proved that she can unite to the noblest qualities of the Sister of Charity the business-like capacity of a public officer.'<sup>1</sup> Or, in the words of 'A Protestant Englishman', even 'if she be no Christian—if she be any of the persons enumerated in the Prayer Book, Jew, Turk, Infidel or Heretic—whether her energy be derived from devotion to Brahma or zeal for some pagan god—she is by her actions setting an example which any Churchman may be proud to follow.'<sup>2</sup>

The truth is that in its early days the paper regarded all the arts as a sub-department of morals or utility; and judged the products accordingly. Verse was chiefly used for satirical purposes and was often exceedingly bad. When old Talleyrand died in 1838, and his stick tapped no more along the galleries of the Tuileries or in Holland House, the *Spectator* had no thought of his art, but only of his political villainies and gloated over his demise in epigrams better than most of its verse.

<sup>1</sup> 4 November, 1854.

<sup>2</sup> 20 January, 1855.

## I

Prince Talleyrand dead ! yes, pray for truth receive it :  
He does not say it, so you may believe it.

## II

The bones of Talleyrand here claim a sigh,  
The wadding of a great exploded lie.

## V

If through Pall Mall in search of him you go,  
You shall not look for Talleyrand in vain,  
For he'll persuade the King who rules below,  
To send him up as envoy here again.  
And if the Sovereign who commands the shades  
Sought an Ambassador of rarest skill,  
Not one adept of all the infernal trades  
Could better represent his master's will.

## VI

A stony face the Bishop-Prince put on,  
To hide a heart of yet more lifeless stone.

## IX

No doubt, Death bowed and offered snuff before  
He whispered Talleyrand his life was o'er.

## XI

How like old Time he was ! The scythe his cunning,  
The wit the glittering sand for ever running.

Much the same ethical standard was adopted for judging the stage as for books. The most whole-hearted example of this heresy is a campaign against *La Traviata* :

‘ When, a few weeks ago, we published a short paper drawing attention to the laxity of morals and degradation of taste indi-

cated by the production of the opera *La Traviata* at His Majesty's Theatre and its continued popularity throughout the Season with that fashionable audience, largely composed of the ladies of the highest English society, we studied to avoid exaggeration of the scandal, or any vehemence of language that might give unnecessary and unmerited pain to the parties concerned in the transaction we were censuring. . . . If the patrons of the opera were nice in their appreciation of the morals of art, managers and actors would be more scrupulous. If the Press did not too often forget to censure, or even abstain from welcoming with enthusiastic praise, displays of histrionic and lyrical talent by which propriety is violated, the patrons of the opera would be awakened to a sense of their public responsibility as influential directors of the most refined amusement of English society. . . .

'The minister of religion, the physician, and the statesman, may explore the plague-spots of humanity, upheld and shielded by their lofty and generous purpose. But who can think without a shock of associating such scenes and characters with the amusements of our leisure hours? . . .

'We doubt—or rather, we emphatically deny—that opera representations of interesting prostitutes . . . are the properest or likely means of exciting the right kind of sympathy and practical encouragement towards fallen women. . . .' Finally, and characteristically, 'We claim for music itself, and for art in general, a nobler inspiration than can be caught from the regions of sensual profligacy and moral degradation.'<sup>1</sup>

The same sort of creed, qualified by a touch of snobbery, very rare in the paper, is decipherable in a most Early Victorian paragraph published in November, 1848. Law-court proceedings had just revealed the fascinating secret that the arts of drawing and etching were practised within the

<sup>1</sup> 23 August, 1856.

home-sanctity of Balmoral itself. In discussing those products of the royal pencils, which were exhibited in the Brook Street Galleries in 1925, the *Spectator* recognized 'the Prince's well-known turn for the mediæval' and 'the Queen's liking for animals'; and observed that 'art, like love, is equal in its favours for humanity, and as much exalts the exalted as it does the humble.'<sup>1</sup>

The reviews of Browning's earlier publications are extremely conscientious, and since one of the latest of our critics has ticketed him off as 'a born sloven' it cannot be said that the omission to review *Pauline*, or the severe criticisms of *Paracelsus*, *Sordello*, and *King Victor and King Charles* as they appeared in turn were in any degree Philistine. Indeed, the reviewers rather surprisingly detect virtues, 'evidences of mental power and, perhaps, of poetical talent.' After all, the paper was a little inclined to regard all poetry as a sort of disease of pubescence. It said, in 1836:

'A person is no more to be blamed for writing and (if he can) publishing verse, than a seed for germinating and (if it can) forcing its way above the earth even at a time when the thoughts of all men are so much engaged in matters of grave import that they have little time to bestow on playthings of the imagination.'

Up to a point, then, Robert Browning was not badly treated; but the reviewers (who were gradu-

<sup>1</sup> 12 February, 1848.



ally brought round to an appreciation of Mrs. Browning, although she was 'unladylike') should have found some merit in *Men and Women*, which contains some of the very best of Browning. The volume decided the *Spectator* to give him up as hopeless, as incurable, as past their help.

'His views of style are stereotyped and belong to him as inseparably as his powerful imagination and acute intellect, and the only possible conclusion is, now that twenty years have elapsed since his first appearance as a poet, that he either cannot mend or will not.'

The least intelligent reviews of any well-known writer are those of Dickens. They suggest that there was some obligation among the intellectuals to find fault with a popular success.

In 1836, the reviewer of *Boz* dared most rashly to suspect 'that his strength lies in pathos', whereas 'humour, we venture to think, is not his forte'. In *Pickwick* 'the characters have too much caricature, and the incidents belong to the stage rather than to real life'—a distinction which loses half its force in these days of real-life drama.

Two years later, the *Spectator* was exercised to discover why Dickens was a best seller—for 'the popularity of *Boz*, which circulates his feuillades by thousands, and at once floats an indifferent magazine, is one of the literary wonders of the day.' This is probably because 'he calls upon his reader

for no exertion—requires from him no mental elevation : he who runs may read *Boz*.’<sup>1</sup>

To this contempt for Dickens as a popular writer in the worst sense, the *Spectator* adhered as late as 1853 (*Bleak House*).

‘ His power of amusing is not weakened now that the novelty of his style has passed away, nor his public wearied by the repetition of effects in which truth of nature and sobriety of thought are largely sacrificed to mannerism and point. He must be content with the praise of amusing the idle hours of the greatest number of readers ; not, we may hope, without improvement to their hearts, but certainly without profoundly affecting their intellects or deeply stirring their emotions.’<sup>2</sup>

Or—as we should say—he was a merely clever, rather sentimental bookstall favourite !

Another example of the *Spectator*’s refusal to praise an acknowledged idol is the withdrawal of its approval from Tennyson as his fame increased. They saw promise in his first volume (*Poems, chiefly Lyrical*, 1830) and though they reminded him ‘ that originality and oddity are not the same ’ they assert that they ‘ somewhat confidently expect to meet the author again ’.<sup>3</sup> But the second volume was sighed over as being ‘ but the echo of its former self ’, and in 1842 they went into the whole question in their review of his *Collected Poems*. In this review, a distinction is drawn between classical and ‘ singular ’

<sup>1</sup> 31 March, 1838.

<sup>2</sup> 24 September, 1853.

<sup>3</sup> 21 August, 1830.

(that is to say 'romantic') poetry, and Tennyson is assigned to the latter class. 'But the worst point in Tennyson's poetry is that the peculiarity is not always his own.' The book is then examined in detail, and it is decided that 'the gem of the whole, for variety, delicate perception of character, rustic grace, spirit and pathos, is the pastoral tale embraced in *The May Queen* and its two sequels,'<sup>1</sup>—a choice most certainly not endorsed by posterity!

In 1848 appeared *The Princess*, which

'will not increase the reputation of Alfred Tennyson, but rather diminish it. Mr. Tennyson has here engrafted the weaknesses and affectations of the Cockney school upon the worst peculiarities of his own style; . . . namby-pamby is the true characteristic of the execution.'<sup>2</sup>

To *In Memoriam* (1850) some moral if not poetical qualities were granted:

'The volume is pervaded by a religious feeling, and an ardent aspiration for the advancement of society—these two sentiments impart elevation, faith and resignation; so that memory, thought, and a chastened tenderness, generally predominate over deep grief. The grave character of the theme forbids much indulgence in conceits such as Tennyson sometimes falls into, and the execution is more finished than his volumes always are; there are very few prosaic lines, and a few instances of that excess of naturalness which degenerates into the mawkish. The nature of the plan is favourable to those pictures of common landscape and of daily life, redeemed from triviality by genial feeling and a perception of the lurking beautiful, which are the author's distinguishing characteristics. The scheme, too, enables him

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<sup>1</sup> 4 June, 1842.

<sup>2</sup> 8 January, 1848.

appropriately to indulge in theological and metaphysical reflections ; where he is not quite so excellent. . . . As a whole, there is inevitably something of sameness in the work, and the subject is unequal to its long expansion.'

Nor was his formal, state-occasion style more leniently judged, for the *Spectator* said of the *Wellington Ode* that

' as a poem, it is hardly equal to its theme ; and as a work of art, it is by no means remarkable. Short as it is, there are strong traces of Tennyson's mannerism and affectation of simplicity, pushed almost to babyism, for the opening might have been suggested by the well-known dirge of "Who killed Cock Robin ? "'<sup>1</sup>

Yet for all its superiority towards established reputations, the *Spectator* was itself often at a loss before the works of an unknown poet. For instance, when Matthew Arnold anonymously published his first book, the *Spectator* wrote that

' *The Strayed Reveller*, and the poems that accompany it, have the general merits and faults of several other poetical publications that have lately appeared ; as if haste and negligence were becoming the mode among those who aspire to build the lofty rhyme. The volume exhibits a good deal of poetical power, and occasionally depth of thought ; but there is either no subject, or the subject is left in such obscurity that none can clearly be made out. A further and fatal fault follows from this, which is unintelligibility. We do not mean that a single image may not be plainly presented, or a single idea clearly enough expressed ; but the whole having no purpose, or the purpose not being distinctly impressed, the reader cannot catch the drift, or

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<sup>1</sup> 20 November, 1852.

if perceived, it leads to nothing. The writer is fond of trying experiments with metre ; and indulges in licence which produces strangeness, not variety.'

Three years later they said of *Empedocles on Etna, and Other Poems*, that :

'There are poetical feeling and poetical thoughts in this volume, with a fluent versification and a style making some approach to a quaint richness : but these are only the externals of poetry. There should be freshness of subject, and an artistic treatment, which rejects what is non-essential (though it may be related), and presents the essential in the most effective manner : there should also be independence of mind, if not absolute originality. Arnold has not got as far as these requisites ; his larger pieces are encumbered, the topics of his shorter poems are narrow and common. In his dramatic scenes he reminds one of Barry Cornwall, or rather of his followers ; many of his occasional poems recall Tennyson.'<sup>1</sup>

The *Spectator* was always a serious paper, inclined to regard writing as a useless, if pretty, accomplishment, unless devoted to the service of some moral or useful end. It thought it good, for instance, to use fine writing to popularize political economy ; and therefore perhaps was transported by admiration for Harriet Martineau. 'Miss Martineau's industry delights us. This month is graced by another of her admirable little fictions. Great doctrines are taught by small stories.' She is 'one of the benefactors of her species' and 'perhaps no other female ever occupied the same proud position of a

<sup>1</sup> 30 October, 1852.



national instructress, on the topics of the country's most essential interests.'<sup>1</sup>

On the other hand, its critics thought it proper, as we have seen, for a young lady to write graceful verses on *Flowers of the Morn and Evening*, for they could understand both heavy literature written with a high moral purpose, and trivially pious trifles. But they were shocked by a seriousness that has survived Harriet Martineau's, because it was intense, fierce and passionate—that is to say, the seriousness of the Brontës; and criticized the writings of these hyper-conscientious sisters as though they were subversive of morality! The reviewer complained, for instance, of 'a low tone of behaviour (rather than morality)' in *Jane Eyre*, and that 'neither the heroine nor the hero attracts sympathy', while admitting that it 'displays considerable skill in the plan, and great power, but rather shown in the writing than in the matter'.<sup>2</sup> Charlotte Brontë was sensitive to criticism, and she was evidently afraid of the *Spectator's* influence, for she wrote to Mr. Smith, her publisher, that

'the critique in the *Spectator* gives that view of the book which will naturally be taken by a certain class of minds; I shall expect it to be followed by other notices of a similar nature. The way of detraction has been pointed out, and will probably be pursued,

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<sup>1</sup> 7 July, 1832.

<sup>2</sup> 6 November, 1847.

Most further notices will in all likelihood have a reflection of the *Spectator* in them.’<sup>1</sup>

She met the rebuff stoically, adding ‘Time will show. If *Jane Eyre* has any solid matter in it, it ought to weather the gust of unfavourable wind.’<sup>1</sup>

Emily Brontë’s *Wuthering Heights* appeared in the same year, and met with much the same praise and blame ; for

‘the incidents and persons are too coarse and disagreeable to be attractive, the very best being improbable, with a moral taint about them. . . . The execution, however, is good ; grant the writer all that is requisite as regards matter, and the delineation is forcible and truthful’.

In the next year it was Anne’s turn to launch her venture, whereupon the *Spectator* accused her of ‘a morbid love for the coarse, not to say the brutal’, and reminded her that ‘mere existence is not a sufficient reason for a choice of subject’. Once again, however, it felt bound to admit that ‘a rough vigour characterized the whole batch of Bells’.

In the *Poems* (1848) the *Spectator* detected ‘a style which separates them from the effusions of poetasters, together with much strength of thought and vigour of diction’. But ‘the indispensable

<sup>1</sup> Letter to Smith, Elder & Co. 13 November, 1847. From the *Life of Charlotte Brontë*, by Mrs. Gaskell.

arts of selection and of blotting are yet to be learned by the Bells'.<sup>1</sup>

When sober *Shirley* appeared, with its historical atmosphere which Harriet Martineau could never have created, it was welcomed by the *Spectator* as an improvement, containing 'less coarseness and somewhat less questionable propriety' than other Bell productions; but there is still 'a sort of ingrained rudeness', and 'Curren Bell has yet to learn, that in art the agreeable is as essential as the powerful, and that the reader's attention must be attracted, not forced'.<sup>2</sup>

But it was not until she published *Villette*, in 1853, that Charlotte Brontë finally won the *Spectator's* blessing—when 'but for one fault in the central character, we have nothing but praise to bestow upon the characterization of this book'; while the style is distinguished by 'that clearness and power which are the result of mastery over the thoughts and feelings to be expressed, over the persons and scenes to be described'.<sup>3</sup>

The truth is that in the domain of art (though not of personal politics) the *Spectator* was afraid of turbulence, resented violence, and disliked being hustled; and this jog-trot progression of its mind is displayed in criticisms of others besides the stormy

<sup>1</sup> 11 November, 1848.

<sup>2</sup> 3 November, 1849.

<sup>3</sup> 12 February, 1853.

Brontës. Of Meredith they said that 'if Mr. Meredith intends to cultivate poetry, this over-exuberance must be steadily repressed';<sup>1</sup> and of *Moby Dick* that it was 'rhapsody run mad'.

We may perhaps date a new feeling towards the arts from the appearance of William Rossetti. The *Spectator* had not much that was good to say of a number of pictures exhibited in 1849 and bearing the then mystic and wholly unexplained initials P.R.B.; but unlike most other papers, it found a certain merit in Millais and Hunt. Perhaps this qualified admiration attracted the new critic. At any rate we know that William Rossetti was writing reviews for the *Spectator* in 1850; and in 1851 we may safely infer that he was the author of a long and sympathetic enunciation of the Pre-Raphaelite principles. It was the first to appear in any periodical (other than the *Germ*) and is worth the notice of every student of the history of art. His preliminary sketch of the Pre-Raphaelite philosophy may be quoted.<sup>2</sup>

'We have already had occasion to allude to the works of Messrs. Millais and Hunt—works the principle of which it is essential to understand at the outset; for they are among the very few at the Academy whose principle can be clearly stated and apprehended, or indeed which are animated by any, apart from the mystifying traditions or conventions of the studio.

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<sup>1</sup> 5 July, 1851.

<sup>2</sup> 25 October, 1851.

‘ This principle may be broadly laid down as “ the truth and nothing but the truth ”, were it possible to *reproduce* the facts of nature, instead of merely *representing* them proximately. But, it is to be asked, the truth of what ? For surely every object in nature is not *per se* a subject for a picture. The objection is well founded but ill-addressed : let the still-life painters answer it—the flower, the animal painters—any in short, before those who deal with the highest themes of human life and emotion. But, as certainly as painting is an imitative art—and that it is so, who will dispute ?—so certainly is the correct and faithful preferable to the careless imitation of the accessory portions of a picture. Thus stated, our assertion seems an impertinent truism : but it will not become so until the conscientious labour bestowed on such accessories, as on the more important parts, shall have ceased to be matter for ridicule.

‘ One other objection to the literal rendering of a subject is advanced, and appears at first sight to be entitled to some respect on intellectual grounds : yet we believe that, when at all closely examined, it will be found a specious and self-refuting fallacy. It is said that no one sees the thing as it actually is, but through the medium of his own feelings ; and that therefore the strict external representation is, for the higher purposes of art, not true, but false. Accepting this assumption, we may inquire how it is possible, whether desirable or not, that the artist should produce other than an ideal, *his own* ideal ? Or we may take the converse of the proposition, and ask how the spectator, who cannot help idealizing nature in the mere act of vision, should find the literal copy of nature more impracticable ? Either way, the objection appears wholly untenable.

‘ We have entered thus far on a consideration of the leading qualities of the “ Pre-Raphaelite ” pictures, because we think it evident that the artists *have not picked up their principles at random*, and that these ought not therefore to be cried down in any hasty clique spirit. We believe that irrespectively of the mere deserts of the pictures themselves, they exercise an influence of the very kind most needed in English art, and will continue to do so at a potent rate of increase. . . . Perhaps a somewhat juster notion will prevail henceforward of the dis-



inction between " Archaic Art " and " archaic honesty "; and less parrot hearsay about false perspective and snapped draperies will be abroad.'

Rintoul even in his early days evidently sought for the specialist in art ; but he never quite conquered his Philistine attitude. That unhappy egoist, Robert Haydon, threw quarts of vitriol year after year, and month after month, on the unhappy Academy. When he ended his magniloquent days with a dramatic suicide in 1846, the *Spectator* used the occasion to give its own view of the proper place for art critics. Always the *Spectator* looked on an artist as a public servant, whose existence could only be justified if he did good to others through his art ; and they considered, therefore, that he should be treated like any other deserving applicant for Poor Law relief :

' The artist and the thinker are not money-making or money-keeping animals. . . . It is of the utmost consequence to society that the race of thinkers and imaginative constructors be kept alive and vigorous. Pensions for poor poets and philosophers do more harm than good. . . . Find work for them that they can do, and wages.'

What would poor Haydon have said to that word ' wages ' !

As Rintoul grew older, wrote less and deputed more, he began to take more account of men of letters. The influence of his editor, the son of

Leigh Hunt, doubtless contributed. In the year 1859—the last of Rintoul's management of the paper—the most interesting contributor, though he was almost on his death-bed, was old Leigh Hunt. In a rather rambling series, which was called 'The Occasional,' Hunt talks and talks about everything and nothing, from his 'Professor's chair of the miscellaneous'. His friend Hazlitt once wrote of him that

'his natural gaiety, etc. . . . carry off in society whatever in his writings may to some seem flat and impertinent. A light, familiar grace, and mild unpretending pathos, are the characteristics of his more sportive or serious writings, whether in poetry or prose. (But) he perhaps takes too little pains and indulges in too much wayward caprice in both.'<sup>1</sup>

Certainly, 'the Occasional' is tedious, being the expression of Leigh Hunt's anecdotage; but it is saved here and there by the touching *naïveté* of second-childhood. On 19 March, for instance, writing of the Italian poet, Poerio, who was then being lionized in England, he recalled his own imprisonment years ago, for tactlessly drawing attention to the fact that George IV was stout.

'Some of these sufferings, though not to be compared with them for a moment, the writer of this article has known what it is to undergo. He underwent them in consequence of his denouncements of a foolish prince (who angered him with breaking his promises) and in behalf of what still appears to him to

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<sup>1</sup> Hazlitt's *Spirit of the Age*.

have been a good cause, that of Catholic Emancipation (though Popery has not behaved itself well after gaining it). It is proper to add that these very mischiefs forced him upon such a life of temperance, as a natural tendency to pleasure would probably have obstructed; and that they have thus been a means of enabling the animal spirits which he inherited from one of his parents, to bring him to old age, notwithstanding the graver and sicklier portion of blood derived (God bless her) from the other.' <sup>1</sup>

He is at his best when he is shocked, and his anger was particularly hot against 'Bomba,' King of Naples.

'Ferdinand Januarius Joseph, King of the Two Sicilies, was a born vulgarian and pedlar, shrewd enough in turning a penny and cheating his customers, but wholly incompetent to the station in which he found himself, and exasperated by the unconscious state of being so. He ought to have been a costermonger, cheating six days out of the seven, and frequenting the lowest chapel on Sundays, in order to cheat the Devil. Fear was his ruling passion, and accounted for all the rest. He was a timid horseman; a prostrate bigot; a conceder of constitutions out of fright; a violator of them for the same reason.' <sup>2</sup>

But Leigh Hunt was also ardent, if not convincing, in the defence of his friends. One of these was a certain Mr. Ollier—a very minor novelist, it would seem—who 'gave lectures (in the country) on celebrated writers', was 'an excellent player on the flute,' and who died, alas! of 'an atrophy afflicted with asthma.'

Another was Shelley, whom Hunt loyally defended against the *Spectator's* reviewer of the *Shelley*

<sup>1</sup> 19 March, 1859.

<sup>2</sup> 28 May, 1859.

*Memorials.* This reviewer's conclusions and conjectures were unjust, Leigh Hunt contends, because

'Shelley was not a man to be judged by ordinary rules of any kind. He was one of those great and rare spirits, who, by a combination of the extremes of intellectual perceptiveness and nervous sensibility, may be said, instead of being the madman that ordinary judgments would pronounce him, to possess reason itself in excess ; and by discerning, through their sympathy with the needs of the world, what the world ought reasonably to be, are qualified to give rules to their fellow-creatures, and be the founders of new faiths, or improvers on the old. Inasmuch as they are human in the ordinary sense, they may err ; but, inasmuch as they carry humanity to its highest and widest extent they approach divinity.'<sup>1</sup>

The 'Occasional' of 5 February, 1858, celebrated the birth of little William Hohenzollern, and the wonders of modern science that made it possible for his grandmother Victoria to learn, within a few hours, of his portentous arrival. This greeting of the baby war-lord by the old, revolutionary romantic, is symbolic of the birth of a new age, especially as Hunt quotes from the *Volkszeitung* this prophetic doubt :

'The cannon and the telegraph, the mighty agents bearing the news of the joyful event far and wide all over the Continent—which of these two heralds will the youthful prince hereafter patronize and choose as the symbol of his reign ? May he comprehend the truth, that this century as much exceeds the worth of the past, as the rapidity of the telegraph widely surpasses the stupid roar of the iron muzzle ! May he, ripened to

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<sup>1</sup> 18 June, 1858.

intellectual virility, understand how mean and insignificant is the effect of mere bombastic noise, but that quiet meditative thoughts have power to move the world !'

Then Hunt himself celebrates the significant occasion with a tirade on the British Press, and on Progress.

'What a periodical press does not the United Kingdom possess now, and of what importance is it not felt to be in Europe itself, checking absolute monarchies, and encouraging the rational advance of peoples ! The journal at its head is full of unquestionable statesmanship and the most masterly writing. . . . A penny daily press has started up, absolutely competing with that journal in reading and eloquence, as well as news, though there is a youthful tendency to excess in the display of its acquirements, to which pruning might be of advantage. And in the rest of the greater portion of our periodical literature, daily, weekly, monthly and quarterly, never at any time during its existence was there anything like the mass of intellectual power which it exhibits. . . . The world somehow or other progresses at any rate, and doubtless it does so towards its intellectual and moral portion of the same great and good end towards which, in its planetary character, it is travelling in company with its mighty leader, the sun ; otherwise it would be stopped by the same Divine Cause, which has sent it rolling and gathering knowledge through the mysteries of time and space.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> 5 February, 1859.



## CHAPTER XIV

### SOME CONTRIBUTORS

Professor Church. Tom Hughes. Great lawyers and poets. Swinburne as Reviewer. Meredith, attacked and defended. Anonymity ends.

**L**EIGH HUNT (who by a curious coincidence once lived in the present offices of the *Spectator* in York Street), once said that *the* paper was so well edited and written that all the articles seemed to have emanated from the same pen. How very constant some few contributors were but how very various the team, was known only to those on the staff. A reminiscence from one who did very long service for the paper will reveal some of the secrets. His memory covers much of the reign of Townsend and Hutton and all of St. Loe Strachey's ; and he has some records of Rintoul's days. He writes :

‘It would take too long to enumerate the wide circle of writers who gradually were added to the staff, and were frequent in their contributions to its columns, from Walter Bagehot onwards, but special mention must be made of the Rev. Professor

Alfred J. Church, the Greek scholar, at one time Headmaster of King Edward's School, East Retford, and Rector of Barnet. Church came on the staff in the sixties and remained a constant contributor until his death in 1912, finishing his last review by correcting the proof just a few hours before his death.

‘His capacity for work was immense, and it was rare indeed that his contributions to the *Spectator* were less than a page and a half each week, besides which he contributed articles to the now defunct *Pall Mall Gazette* and *St. James's Gazette*, as well as to many other journals. His contributions to the poetry column were many, and he wrote long reviews, the majority of the shorter reviews, and occasionally a sub-leader. Besides this he was the author of about thirty books, mostly on Greek life and character, as well as his translations of the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*, stated by Belloc to have been the means of making Greek literature to be no longer a task but a pleasure to the English school-boy.

‘Another contributor, Judge Hughes, author of *Tom Brown's Schooldays*, delighted the readers of the *Spectator* for many years with his articles on many topics. He then resolved to give up writing, but after a very short interval asked permission to resume, in the following characteristic note :

DEAR EDITORS,

It is one thing to make good resolutions and another to keep them. I told you I should never write any more letters, but the habit of more than thirty years came back when I had been here two or three days, so I wrote enclosed letter. Then I mislaid it for some days, but finding it this morning, forward it. As it will now be too late, I fancy, for this week's number, of course I shan't feel impugned or aggrieved if you *basket* instead of printing it. Ever yours,

THOS. HUGHES.

'Yet another regular contributor was Mr. John Langton Sandford, who was on the *Inquirer* with Hutton. Amongst his best known *Spectator* contributions were his articles on the Ruling Families of Great Britain, which were afterwards republished in book form and secured a very large sale.

'D. C. Lathbury, for many years editor of the *Economist*, wrote a sub-leader each week, and reviewed books, continuing to write for the paper after he became editor of the *Guardian*. Miss Frances Power Cobbe, who was at one time editor of the first halfpenny London newspaper (now defunct) was a frequent contributor to the *Spectator* in connection with her crusade against vivisection and the many other subjects which this talented lady had made her life-work.

'Amongst the reviewers and writers on law subjects were Lord Bowen, Sir E. Fry, Rt. Hon. Lord Coleridge, Sir Frederick Pollock, Professor Roscoe, and A. V. Dicey. Writers and reviewers on other

subjects included Bagehot, James Martineau, Julian Hawthorne, Sir John Lubbock (Lord Avebury), Edmund Gosse, Professor W. E. H. Lecky, Henry D. Traill, Professor Blackie, Professor Saintsbury, Robert and James Macdonell, H. H. Asquith (Lord Oxford), George Hooper, William Westall, Professor Iverach, Dean Stanley, John Dennis, Rev. E. Thring, Canon Liddon, Professor Jebb, Professor Jowett, Rev. A. J. Butler, James Knowles, Percy Bunting, Wilfrid Ward, William Clarke, Rev. J. Caird, John Morley, Professor Jevons, Viscount Wolseley, General Maurice, Canon MacColl, Harold Cox, Monypenny, Hartley Withers, John Buchan, E. V. Lucas, Charles Whibley, Mrs. Oliphant, Mrs. Cashel Hoey, Helen Milman (Lady Arbuthnot), Julia Ewing, Miss Lock, Miss E. Faithfull, Miss Julia Wedgwood, Miss Dillwyn, Miss Cobbe, Miss Octavia Hill, Miss Price, Benjamin Kidd, H. O. Arnold-Foster, and Lord Cromer.

‘The poetry of the past hundred years has been represented by Rossetti, Tennyson, Alfred Austin, A. C. Swinburne, Robert Bridges, William Watson, Austin Dobson, Coventry Patmore, Richard Le Gallienne, Aubrey De Vere, Herman Merivale, J. Knight Atkin, Stephen Phillips, A. P. Graves and his brother C. L. Graves, Alfred Noyes, J. Mead Faulkner, Katharine Tynan, Walter De la Mare, and M. A. Letts. It was a striking tribute to the

value of these poems that during the time of the late war permission was asked from the proprietors and the authors, for the inclusion of an immense number of these poems in the many anthologies of verse that were published in various parts of the world.

‘The correspondence columns have remained one of the most interesting features of the paper for over half a century. Its subjects have ranged far and wide—Literature, art, science, religion, politics, life and death, eulogy and criticism, animal and bird life, home or Empire, one can always turn to these columns quite certain of finding some phase of life or work that will interest the most leisured or the busiest reader. Many great controversies and subjects have been discussed in these columns by, amongst others, Prof. Huxley, Tyndall, Matthew Arnold, the Duke of Argyll, Charles Kingsley, Canon Ainger, Canon Liddon, Dean Church, Canon MacColl, Frederick Harrison, Wilfrid Ward, Cardinal Newman, Dr. Gore, Lionel Tollemache, Lord Avebury (Sir John Lubbock) and, of course, Algernon Ashton.

‘A certain amount of space was reserved for the art critic. Mr. Harry Quilter occupied this position for many years. The Academy, Grosvenor Gallery, and all other exhibitions of art came under his province, also the reviewing of art books. His criticism of Whistler’s pictures aroused a controversy that



brought in shoals of correspondence, some of it of a rather acrimonious kind, so much so that Quilter jokingly remarked that he would have to walk about with a thick knobby stick to protect himself. . . . Quilter was an easy-going man, with definite ideas on art, generous to those under him, and well liked by his colleagues. After his father's death he left the *Spectator*, and founded a magazine, the *Universal Review*, which had not a very long life, and was not the success he hoped to make of it. Mr. D. S. MacColl succeeded him, followed by Mr. F. Taylor and in later years by Mr. H. Strachey, youngest brother of Mr. J. St. Loe Strachey.

'As a sub-leader writer Miss C. Townsend, daughter of Mr. Meredith Townsend, was undoubtedly a very popular contributor to the columns of the *Spectator*. Her articles were eagerly looked for week by week, many clerical readers using them as a basis for their weekly sermon. Many of these articles were being called for years after their appearance, and would often make an increase in sale of two or three hundred copies in one week.

'James Ashcroft Noble was a reviewer of novels, who for many years had charge of the reviews in this branch of literature. In those days novels were published in two or three volumes and took up an immense amount of space on the review shelves. After his death this department was taken over by

Mr. C. L. Graves, who became the literary editor of the paper. About the time Mr. Gladstone introduced the Home Rule Bill, Graves wrote the witty poems which were republished later on by Smith, Elder & Co. in book form, entitled the *Hawarden Horace*.

‘Speaking of the Home Rule Bill, one is reminded of the great friendship that existed between Mr. Gladstone and Hutton and the break that the *Spectator* made from the Liberal party when the Bill was introduced. The partners opposed the Bill from the first and became Liberal Unionists. The editors would never allow in their columns any criticism that suggested any ulterior motive against Mr. Gladstone. They judged the Bill on its merits, and disagreed with its purpose, maintaining their points against all odds. What Mr. Gladstone thought of Hutton and the *Spectator* is well told in Morley’s *Life of Gladstone*. The position was a similar one to that which they had taken in the sixties in connexion with the struggle between the northern and southern states of America : and the result for the paper was the same, for though at first it lost many readers it soon became more popular and the circulation steadily increased.’

Among the greater names quoted in this brief reminiscence, some special emphasis may be put on Swinburne’s. He wrote a very great deal for the *Spectator* between 1862 and 1884, many reviews,

some of his most pleasing lyrics, and a number of letters that are especially worth recalling as they illustrate contemporary standards of criticism.

The first review has particular interest. It is of Victor Hugo's 'new novel,' *Les Misérables*, and Swinburne was only twenty-five when he wrote it. It is worth comparing with his ecstatic laudation of Victor Hugo written much later in the *Encyclopedia Britannica*. The younger critic was the saner. The essential part of the review is worth quotation.

'A remarkable attempt to examine social problems from the artistic point of view. . . . Revolt against society and systems is the principle proclaimed in the preface, and taught in every incident of the story. Yet withal Victor Hugo is no vulgar rebel against authority; no mere blaspheming Capaneus; but a Titan stealing light that he may impart it. Age has mellowed without impairing his inspiration, and an unquestionable faith in the good of human nature has finally triumphed over the fervid political animosities of the man. It need scarcely be said that his style has a nameless charm of language, or that his story always interests, though it may fail to convince. To those of us who can allow themselves to forget that M. Victor Hugo's system of the world is not ours, and that he has another heaven and another earth, the exquisite finish of every detail, the nature thrown into every little touch, will give, partially at least, the effects of actual and very beautiful life. It is like music and familiar voices that have blended with the fantastic tracery of a dream.

'The question to what purpose is this picture of human misery and shortcomings remains to our mind the great argument against M. Victor Hugo's book. . . . Surely it is false to infer that laws and manners do in any eminent degree create a social damnation. Allowing that Jean Valjean was punished beyond his due, yet we may fairly say that the era of Draconian legislation is passed, and that, after all, we must in this world look

chiefly to acts, and leave the question of intention to Heaven. The true preventive for all crimes that arise from necessity is the simple expedient of an efficient poor-law which M. Victor Hugo, like most Frenchmen not men of science, would probably regard with horror. For the man who, having the workhouse at hand, prefers stealing to breaking stones and temporary separation from his family, we confess we have little pity. The case of Fantine's ruin and desertion is no doubt more difficult. The problem how to keep a young girl, who can earn a scanty but sufficient living by her needle, from preferring to live idly, expensively, and at the cost of her self-respect, with a young man whose dress and manners fascinate her, because they seem to indicate superiority, is one which no legislation can solve. But M. Victor Hugo is untrue to morality and to art when he entitles the latter period of Fantine's career *The Descent*. He seems to imply that if her seducer had pensioned her, and she had been able to live on without selling herself, taking her old sin as a matter of pleasant memory, she would have been a higher woman than she was as the street pariah. To ourselves, Fantine, mutilating herself, sacrificing life and shame for her daughter, is on a higher moral level than Fantine dining happily at St. Cloud with her seducer and his friends. . . . We object absolutely to the idea that we can extirpate vice by removing its opportunities. We want the morality of men, not the faultless movements of puppets. It is strange that an artist like M. Victor Hugo should believe that there is any fatality in men's manners which can overbear a resolute will or God's order. . . . Is it reserved for our own century to proclaim that man, who seems to have conquered space, is yet powerless against his own appetites, and must bind himself that he may not rush upon the sword ?'

Swinburne wrote much for the *Spectator*, but he could also abuse it, as indeed it could abuse him. In complete fidelity to its old ethical standard of verse, the paper had rated George Meredith for his sonnet sequence. It was an offence that the so-

called sonnets were of sixteen lines, not fourteen ; and this overflow was sign and symptom of an unworthy rebellion against Victorian standards of both substance and form. Here is a passage from their review.

‘ The chief composition of the book, absurdly called *Modern Love*, is a series of sonnets intended to versify the leading conception of Goethe’s “ elected affinities ”. Mr. Meredith effects this with occasional vigour, but without any vestige of original thought or purpose which could justify so unpleasant a subject. . . . The jocularities are intolerably feeble and vulgar. . . . The intended poetry is meretricious. To speak of the moon as a “ face of music mute ” is a mere unmeaning eulogism of that admirable planet.’

The reviewer, with rather pompous but not ineffective banter, selected for special satire the thirteenth sonnet containing the lines—

‘ Lose calmly love’s great bliss,  
When the renewed forever of a kiss  
Sounds through the listless hurricane of hair.’

On these he wrote

‘ What is the “ forever of a kiss ” ? . . . Surely the “ sound ” of a kiss is not the true poetic and permanent element therein ? If there is a “ forever ” in these expressive symbolic actions at all, we submit that it is not in the sound—that on the contrary the sound is an accidental and rather unfortunate adjunct and accident in them. . . . We fear that there was something of a “ listless hurricane ” of ideas in the author’s mind when he extemporized this very noble language.’

This drew a characteristic retort from Swinburne.



In a letter to the editor he wrote the writer's own admiration for Mr. Meredith's work

'is no doubt a matter of infinitely small moment. I wish only to appeal seriously on general grounds against this sort of criticism as applied to one of the leaders of English literature. . . . Such a review of such a book is surely out of date. Praise or blame should be thoughtful, serious, careful.'

and then in reference to the critic's objection to the subject matter Swinburne adds :

'The business of verse-writing is hardly to express convictions, and if some poetry, not without merit of its kind, has at times dealt in dogmatic morality, it is all the worse and all the weaker for that. As to subject, it is too much to expect that all schools of poetry are to be forever subordinate to the one just now so much in request with us, whose scope of sight is bounded by the nursery walls ; that all Muses are to bow down before her who babbles, with lips yet warm from their pristine pap, after the dangling delights of a child's coral ; and jingles with flaccid fingers one knows not whether a jester's or a baby's bells.'

The discussion ended with the following editorial note.

'We insert this gladly, from personal respect for our correspondent, whose opinion on any poetical question should be worth more than most men's, but must reiterate that it was not after a hasty, but the most careful study of Mr. Meredith's book that we passed our judgment. . . . We do not know to what school Mr. Swinburne may allude as writing the childish-moral poetry. No eminent poets of the kind are known to us.'—ED.

The principle of anonymity on which Rintoul, Townsend and Hutton, and St. Loe Strachey had all agreed came to an end just before the end of Strachey's

reign ; and when he resigned but continued a weekly contribution, often of two articles, his own signature was the most salient. He had himself, not wholly against the will, yielded to the ' delicious notoriety '. Whether we approve of anonymity or what botanists call in another reference, the doctrine of signatures, the habit of signing at least relieves the historian of a paper of much research.

The later files of the *Spectator* explain themselves, are their own history.

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